

LITTLE BOY BLACK *AND* **OTHER SKETCHES**

BETTY REYNOLDS COBB





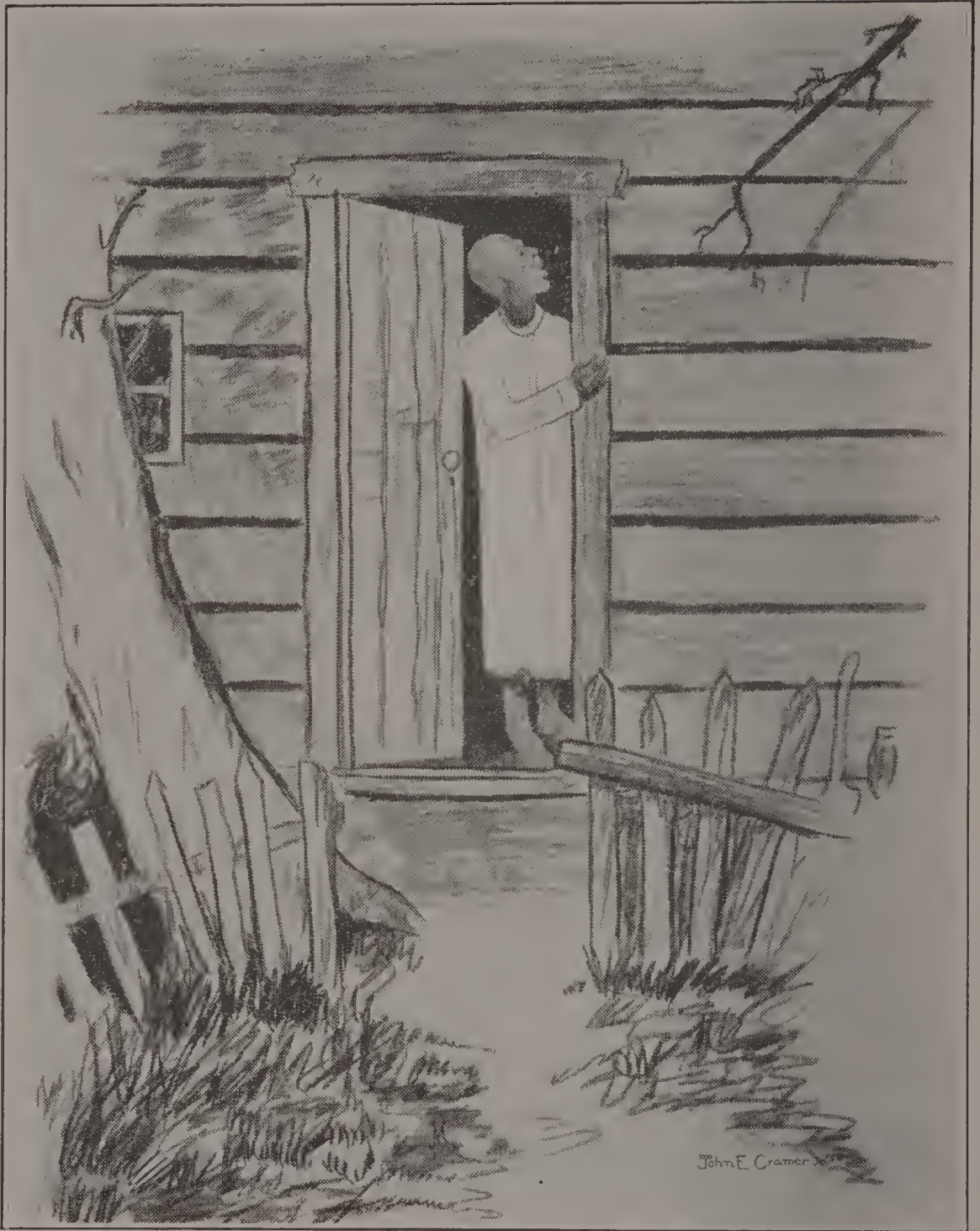
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LITTLE BOY BLACK
AND OTHER SKETCHES



"Celie, dar's gwine ter be er 'partment."—Page 110

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LITTLE
BOY BLACK
AND OTHER SKETCHES

By BETTY REYNOLDS COBB



ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN E. CRAMER, JR. ✓

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To
Ol' Ma'ster

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LITTLE BOY BLACK

LITTLE BOY BLACK

WHEN SABRY came to be woman-of-all-work about the house she brought with her a hanger-on, in the person of a small son of Ham in sexless garments,—a baby boy aged four.

"I am afraid he will be dreadfully in the way," sighed Mrs. Rawlins, but you have to keep him with you, of course. What is your name, boy?"

"McWilliam McHenry McKinley McGhee," was the surprising answer.

"My time is too precious for all that," laughed Mrs. Rawlins, "let's shorten it."

"We calls him Kinley," proffered Sabry.

"Wait a minute," cried May Rawlins, the young daughter of the house, looking quizically into the little black face, while she searched her mind for a name better suited to his small person. "I have it!" she exclaimed.

"Little Boy Black, come call your hogs,
Pigoo, pige, pigoo!"

And "Little Boy Black" he became from that hour on, and, to May, a great source of amusement.

He was more precocious than the average child of his race, which is saying a great deal for Little

Boy Black. He soon came to look upon May, as the giver of pleasant gifts, and was always lying in wait.

"I boun' you don't know whut I'm hangin' 'roun' fer," he would say, putting his little black face in at the door, and making an effort to wipe the look of expectancy from his features.

"I haven't the slightest idea," May would affirm.

"I's hangin' 'roun' fer er bistit."

He always got the "bistit", and usually something added.

Little Boy Black, however, possessed many of the characteristics of his race, besides the flat nose. May came unexpectedly into the dining room, one morning, to find him surreptitiously filling his pockets with fruit, taken from the table.

"Without so much as saying 'If you please'," said May, reproachfully.

The little rascal rose to the occasion. "Ef you please, ma'm," he said glibly. Then he made a move in defense. "I wus des playin' wid yo' apples."

May laughed uproariously.

"May, you spoil that child shamefully," said Mrs. Rawlins. "It is wrong."

"Why, he is only a baby, Mother," May de-

fended herself. "You know I just have to have something to pet."

May was just at the age to air her opinions and feel wise. In defending herself for the attentions bestowed upon Little Boy Black, she became positively didactic.

"All healthy minded people love children," she said. "Some show a marked degree of partiality, loving only the good and the beautiful; as for myself—"

"Oh, you", interrupted her mother, "you are like the admirer of Sentimental Tommy, the wickeder they are the better pleased you be; as for myself, I prefer them white."

"Now that isn't fair," May demurred. "To me Little Boy Black represents childhood in the abstract. He is the only child in sight and for that reason, Dad and I, at least, are going to lavish some of our surplus affection on him."

It was about this time that May chose her life profession,—for the third time. This time it was kindergarten work, and she began trying some of her pet theories on Little Boy Black, who proved very apt. The make-believe instinct was raised to the *nth* power in him.

"Let's play Jacky-Boy," he would beg, and for that day he would insist upon being called "Jacky-

Boy". So realistic did the play become to him, when he pretended that he was the little white boy, who often visited the Rawlins home, that he refused to have anything to do with his mother, and referred to her as "the cook".

"Where is Little Boy Black?" asked May, while he was playing Jacky-Boy.

"Ugh," said the little rascal, "I 'spec' he down ter de big house tryin' ter steal sumpen."

"I am cultivating his imagination," May informed her father that night, when she told him this story. "I might be training up a Paul Dunbar, mightn't I, Daddy?"

"It is possible," laughed her father, "then you might be unfitting him for the only thing for which the negro of the South is adapted,—a servant."

"I do not want to do him any harm, father,—if you think I might—"

Mr. Rawlins laughed indulgently. "Oh, go ahead, if it amuses you. I do not suppose it will have much effect one way or another."

And May did go ahead. When a girl lives far out in the country, and has imagination, she often amuses herself in strange ways. Many afternoons, when she might have been playing bridge, had she lived in some urban community, May was to be found, curled up in a big chair, telling tales

to Little Boy Black, who would lie on a rug at her feet for hours.

They were thus engaged, one day, when Tom put his shock of brown hair in at the window and announced a visitor.

"It's Big Medicine, Sis. In what capacity does he call?"

May understood that by "Big Medicine" Tom meant Hugh Haden, just home from medical college.

"For shame, Tom," she laughed, "if Hugh has a good opinion of himself, he is not the only one. There are others—"

"Of course, there are others," laughed Tom. "Look out, Little Boy Black, Big Medicine will be carrying your Miss May off."

"Who, dat white man?" asked Little Boy Black impudently, as he rolled over on the rug and looked coolly at the "white man" in question, who was coming up the walk.

If Tom had created an embarrassing situation, he was good enough to come to the rescue. He swung himself easily in at the window and went to meet Hugh with a laugh. But Little Boy Black was quicker than he.

"Is you gwine ter ca'y Mi' May off?" he asked dryly.

"Get out, Boy," said Tom, givng him a push, "this is not the doctor, you know."

Little Boy Black was a creature of strange fancies. Big Medicine, as Tom insisted on calling Hugh Haden was, to him, little short of an ogre, and for weeks he kept out of his way.

However, Hugh had something in his pocket, one day, that made him forget his fears. He would have braved more for a piece of candy than Shakespeare's fifth-stage man for that bubble, reputation. From that time on, he and Hugh were friends.

True to Mrs. Rawlins' prophesy, too much attention proved bad for his manners. He soon came to look for it, as due, not only from the family, but from visitors as well.

One day, when May and Hugh were on the lawn, he came and threw himself on the grass near by.

"I boun' you don't know whut I's hangin' 'roun' fer," he said, with his irresistible grin spreading over his face.

"Candy," said May throwing him a piece from the box she held in her lap.

"Money," ventured Hugh, pitching him a dime.

His eyes widened, but he did not go. He lay kicking the grass with his bare toes, while he talked to himself.

"I gwine ter ax her," he muttered. "Mammy say I better not, but I is."

He sat up suddenly. "Mi' May, is you gwine ter ma'y dat white man?"

"Hush," May hissed, throwing him more candy. "There, take that to Sabry."

"But is you?" He grew insistent. "Mammy say you is, but when I ax Mr. Tom, he 'low I know you aint gwine ter ma'y Big Medicine."

"You little rascal." May's voice broke, on the verge of tears. "Don't you ever come near me again."

"Oh, come May," Hugh laughed easily, "don't mind the rascal. Tom put him up to that. But don't mind Tom, either; just come, answer the little devil's question."

"I hate you! I just hate you!" May said, unreasonably, as she jumped up, and with her hands to her burning cheeks fled into the house. From the window she watched Hugh as he slowly rode away, hurt and angry.

Little Boy Black always took May's displeasure much to heart, and, on this occasion, sued for peace persistently.

"Mi' May," he called the next morning, as he softly tapped at her door, "dis am yo' pickaninny, en I done brung you a flower; please let me in."

May could not resist his pleadings, and opened the door.

"Is you mad wid me, Mi' May?" he asked contritely.

"Yes," she said crossly, "you have been bad."

"Ain't I gwine ter git ter go ter heben, now?" He had the inherent piety of his race.

"I am told they do not take bad boys," laughed May, "but run along and get my mail."

He returned with a letter that made her forget his offense. In it a visitor was announced, and the next day she arrived—a small elfin thing, with golden curls and eyes of the sky's own blue. At first Little Boy Black looked on in evident wonder, then he turned and went disconsolately into the kitchen.

"Which do you think is the prettier, Little Boy Black," asked Tom, "you or the white baby?"

"I thinks me," he answered frankly, "dat baby's too white."

The next few weeks were lonely ones for Little Boy Black. Enid, of the golden curls, monopolized the family and they no longer felt the need of his artless prattle.

Tom passed Little Boy Black, one morning, sitting disconsolately on the front steps with a woe-begone kitten for companion.

"Your nose is out of joint, eh Boy?"

Little Boy Black felt of his nose slyly, got up and went slowly across the yard with the kitten under his arm.

He was sitting on the steps again that afternoon, when Tom and May started out to carry Enid for a ride.

"Good-bye, Little Boy Black," said May, "here Enid, tell Boy good-bye."

"I'd tiss him good-bye, if he'd 'ash de black off" said Enid. "Won't it tum off, Auntie?"

"I don't know," laughed May. "Better try it, Boy."

Little Boy Black smiled a wistful sort of smile, as he got up and again went toward his house, talking to the kitten as he went.

"Mi' May thinks I's des a common nigger, since dat white baby come," he muttered.

It was dark when they returned, and May came near stumbling over Little Boy Black, who crouched on the steps half asleep, his abbreviated skirt too short to shield his knees from a brisk wind that had risen.

"Looke heah," he cried triumphantly, when May spoke to him. He held up his hands that looked as if they had been soaked in strong soap-suds. "Dey's mightneer white, Mi' May. Dey's

mightneer white!" His lips were blue and his teeth chattered.

"What's the matter, Boy?" cried May, sharply. "You are as wet as a dish-rag. Run tell Sabry I said put dry things on you quickly. I don't care if you are not white, you are my pickaninny, all the same" she added consolingly.

May, thoroughly alarmed, hurried into the kitchen to send Sabry to the child.

"I will finish the supper," she said, "you run put dry clothes on Little Boy Black; he's dripping wet and I am afraid he will be sick."

"No, he won't, Miss May," said Sabry, deprecatingly, "Kinly aint neber sick, 'cepin' he do hab de croup some time, en den I des grease dat nigger 'tell he's es slippery es er eel."

After supper, May went to the little cabin to see about the child, and despite Sabry's assurance that he was not very sick, she went to bed ill at ease, and slept with the proverbial one eye open, listening for the call that came about midnight.

"Get up, May," her mother whispered, "Little Boy Black is sick and wants you."

May hurried into her dressing gown and slippers and went down. She met Tom coming across the yard.

"I am going for Hugh," he said. "I hope the little beggar won't die."

May slipped into the room, where the child lay struggling for breath. She knelt by the bed and took the little hot hand in hers. Sabry crouched by the hearth, moaning incessantly:

"My baby, O my baby! God sabe my baby!" Her moan growing to a chant.

Suddenly the child opened his eyes.

"Mi' May," he whispered hoarsely.

"Here I am, Little Boy Black. Don't you know Mi' May?"

"I can't 'ash de black off," he cried. "I can't 'ash de black off, en Mi' May won't neber kiss me."

"Yes I will," cried May, taking the child in her arms. She stood holding the burning little body close, while she shook with sobs.

After a while the child grew calm, and she laid him gently back on the bed.

The next moment Hugh Haden entered. He worked silently and quickly for a time, and then he stood up and looked at May, his face grave.

"I must go to town for medicine," he said "Will you stay?"

May nodded her assent, and again took her place beside the bed.

"Keep his head cool," Hugh commanded, and the next moment he was gone.

May worked gently, and faithfully, keeping cool cloths on the little burning head, and smoothing the pillows beneath him. The child lay still, breathing in gasps.

Once he seemed to grow easier and opened his eyes. "Mi' May," he whispered. May bent over him, and his little hand reached out timidly and touched her cheek. "Mi' May, will I be er white baby, when I gits ter heben?"

"Yes," said May firmly. She was not a theologian, but she knew that Little Boy Black wanted her to say yes, and she said it fearlessly.

Then he slept again, brokenly, uneasily, the little hot hand against her cheek. Sabry still crouched by the flickering fire, moaning monotonously:

"My baby, O God my baby! O God sabe my baby!"

"Mi' May," the child again opened his eyes and smiled faintly, "Mi' May, is you gwine ter ma'y dat white man?"

May bent impulsively and took him in her arms, but her only answer was a sob. She continued to hold him, rocking gently back and forth, crooning a lullaby. Suddenly she felt the little form stiffen in her arms.

"Mother! she shrieked. For the first time in her life she was face to face with death, and terror seized her.

The door creaked on its rusty hinges and her mother and Hugh entered together.

"It is all over," Hugh said softly.

"You go now, dear," Mrs. Rawlins said, "we will attend to everything."

May felt the room going 'round and 'round with her and put out her hand to steady herself. Suddenly everything grew black and she would have fallen had Hugh not put his arm gently around her shoulders and led her out into the night.

"Poor little girl," Hugh said softly. "It's an awful thing to see a child die."

May shivered, and stood clutching Hugh's hand, while she shook with dry sobs.

"Hugh," she said at last brokenly, "Little Boy Black wanted to know if he would be a white baby when he got to heaven."

"I hope you told him yes."

"I did," said May, "and I believe I was right."

They had reached the door and Hugh turned to go back to Mrs. Rawlins. May's heart sank. This was the first time she had seen him since the day she had sent him away, angry and hurt.

"Hugh," she said softly.

He turned and stood silently waiting, his face grave and set. He was making it hard, but she could not let him go again like that.

"Little Boy Black wanted to know one more thing." Her voice was scarcely more than a whisper.

"What was it, May?"

"He wanted to know—if—I—was—" she stood with her hand on the door knob, poised, ready for flight. "If—I—was 'gwine ter ma'y dat white man."

Her voice broke, she trembled on the verge of hysteria.

Hugh came a step nearer, the grave mask dropped from his face, and a glad light was in his eyes.

"I hope you told him yes." He held out his arms and waited.

With a little cry she slipped into them, and again her only answer was a sob.

OL' MA'STER

OL' MA'STER

TOBE, why you reckon Ol' Ma'ster don' git rid o' dis ol' po' lan' whut won' sprout peas en buy him forty acres en er mule?"

Uncle Abner spoke, with an affectionate, though gruff, air, as he pulled his plow back from under a root that obstructed its passage, to the young negro man who was running a cotton planter in the furrow behind him.

"Min'ral, min'ral," chuckled Tobe, "Don' you know dat Ol' Ma'ster aint gwine ter sell dis lan' when he see great chunks o' ma'gnese, i'on en boxite lyin' er roun' on top o' de groun'?"

"Ugh," grunted Uncle Abner, "I done see dat will-o-wis' lead mo' dan one man ter de po' house. Ma's Billy done die po' es er chu'ch mouse frum dat same reason. En you see dem holes all ober Mr. Billy Williamson's fa'm. In dem same holes he done bury de mos' o' his fambly. Dat is ef dey hadn' been slabin' ter sabe dat min'ral, dey mought be libin' yit. Dat's des de way Ol' Ma'ster gwine ter do. Ol' Mistis done git ol' en gray er waitin' en er waitin' fer dat min'ral ter tu'n into gol'. De boys done growed up en lef home, en eben de gu'ls is er

teachin' school fer ter he'p pay de taxes on dis ol' place. Ol' Ma'ster is des like er chil' chasin' er rainbo' fer ter fin' er pot o' gol'. But he done 'bout wore hese'f out er chasin' dat rainbow. Look dar at him now."

Tobe obediently raised his head and looked across the field to where a man, evidently well advanced in his sixties, rode a little bay mare slowly along the field road. His head was bowed as one in deep thought. He had given the mare the reins, and she was going at will, stopping here and there to bite at a tempting young shrub that grew by the road side, while across the intervening field came the plaintive notes of the man, singing in the voice of age, one of Jeb Stuart's camp songs.

To the negro men, who listened, there was nothing incongruous in the rollicking song and the quavering voice. Uncle Abner especially knew that the song was a sort of vehicle by which the memories of camp days came to this man, who had come from the war of the sixties with youth and health gone, to find his father's fields devastated and his home laid in ruins. But he had retained the land, because he believed that the mineral deposits, cropping out here and there, were evidences of deep running veins and fabulous wealth, and all the strength of his middle age had been spent in the nerve-racking

effort of finding the capital with which to finance what he believed to be valuable mines.

"Ol' Ma'ster done bin singin' dat song eber since I kin 'member," laughed Tobe, "dat is he bin tryin' fer ter sing hit. De chune goes dis way—"

Tobe raised his own musical voice and the notes of "The Girl I left Behind Me" rose, swelled and reached the man across the field, who involuntarily straightened in his saddle, waved a friendly greeting to the negro men and cantered on, sitting a bit straighter as he rode.

"Ol' Ma'ster is a powful good man," Tobe added when his song had died away, as if to apologize for his bit of criticism.

"De bes' man I eber see," replied Uncle Abner; "dat's how come I hates ter see him war hese'f out chasin' er rainbo'. Dem orfans whut allus fin' er home at his house gwine ter suffer ef'n he don' watch out."

"How many he done raised?" asked Tobe, who knew very well how many orphan children had found a home under the sheltering roof of William Rayford, but for the sheer pleasure of hearing the man he loved praised, he encouraged Uncle Abner to talk.

"Ugh, hatter count," replied Uncle Abner; "maybe de fin'ers on bof han's will sarve: Dar's de li'l

gal, whose daddy went ter de Wes' fer de lung sickness and didn't come back. Den dar's de li'l boy he brung frum de sale—"

Tobe laughed hilariously.

"Whut you mean, man? You know dey don' sell no babies at no sale."

"Dey gibs Ol' Ma'ster dis one, 'case he mammy wus daid, en he daddy wus breakin' up housekeepin' en he didn' hab no mo' use fer de baby den he did fer de stove he wus sellin'. I neber fergit how Ol' Mistis look when he come home wid dat li'l tow-haided baby on de pommel o' his saddle, en she done raise nine o' her own."

"But Mammy say dar's allus room in er 'oman's heart fer one mo' baby," interposed Tobe, "en she done 'gin fer ter keer fer dat li'l ol' baby o' mine mo' dan she eber did fer we-alls. I know all erbout dem babies whut Ol' Ma'ster done took ter his house, en I bet ef'n me en Princena en Mammy wus ter all die dat he'd take dat li'l ol' meesly Alex o' mine ter his house. I see him yistidy er ridin' 'roun' de fa'm wid Alex stickin' on behin' like er big black beetle."

"He's got er heart big es er bushel bucket," said Uncle Abner. "But—"

"Did I eber tell you whut he done fer we-alls," interrupted Tobe, "when Daddy died frum de inj'-

ries he got tryin' fer ter sabe de hosses de night de big ba'n bu'n? De very nex day Ol' Ma'ster come en brung Mammy er deed ter de fifty acres o' lan' whut he allus call de Love lot. He say 'twarnt val'ble 'case hit didn' hab no min'ral on hit."

Tobe chuckled.

"No min'ral nuffen! Mammy done foun' er gol' mine on dat lan'; hit makes mo' cotton dan all de res' o' de place tergedder. How much money you recking Mammy done put in de bank last fall?"

The question was never answered, for the next minute the man of whom they spoke rode up and sat on his horse looking dejectedly at the impoverished soil.

"Don't seem to have any strength left in it, does it Abner? Takes three acres to make a bale. When I was a boy—" he paused letting his tired dreamy eyes roam over the newly plowed ground.

The next moment he slipped agilely from his little mare, picked up a rock that had been turned up by the plow and brushed the dirt from it.

"Look at that, Abner," he cried excitedly, "look at it. Iron, I tell you; pure iron. It weighs a ton."

His long, thin hand, gnarled by years of hard labor, shook as he held the rock out for inspection.

"Dat's des like de ones dat man Hackett say aint wuth wukin' up, Ma's William. Dat man say—"

"That man's a damn scoundrel," the man answered angrily, "he merely wants it himself. He is going to force me to sell so that he can gobble it up. I know his game."

Continuing to mutter angrily to himself, he mounted his horse and rode away, leaving Abner looking after him sadly.

"Dat's des de way," he said, "dem pesky li'l ol' rocks des runnin' him crazy. You see how he look, Tobe. Sumpen gone wrong wid Ol' Ma'ster, when he eye done los' hit's twinkle. Whut he mean 'bout dat man Hackett forcin' him ter sell?"

"I don' know," answered Tobe seriously; "I did heah Mr. Dorsey say dat dey gwine ter sue Ol' Ma'ster, but I don' un'erstan'."

Uncle Abner shook his head thoughtfully and fell into a silence, while Tobe, taking his cue from the older man, dropped behind and beguiled himself with singing, although his voice had lost some of its accustomed cheerfulness.

"I sho' would hate ter see Ol' Ma'ster sol' out," Uncle Abner remarked, as he mounted his mule at the end of the day's work, as if the conversation engaged in hours before had not been interrupted; "hit would des 'bout be de las' o' him sho'."

Tobe did not answer but rode silently beside the older man, his brow puckered by lines of puzzled

thought. Uncle Abner's words were troubling him. He carried them home with him, and began to talk about the matter to his mother.

"Mammy," he said as they sat over the evening meal, "Unc' Abner say dey gwine ter sell Ol' Ma'ster out."

"Huh!" The old woman straightened in her chair and glared across the table at her son, as if he were the offender. "Gwine ter sell Ol' Ma'ster out, is dey? Not ef Mandy kin he'p hit, en she b'lebe she kin."

"How, Mammy, how?" asked Tobe eagerly.

"You des wait."

Mandy sat turning her coffee cup, which she had reversed in its saucer.

"You des wait en I'll show you whut dese coffee groun's has ter say."

Tobe watched her intently as she held the cup aloft and studied the sediment that adhered to the cup.

"Dar, I see a youngish white man wid red hair, er slippin' up behin' er ol' white man—"

"Dat's Ol' Ma'ster," interrupted Tobe, but Mandy ignored him.

"Den dar's a black 'oman en er pile er money." She shook the cup again and held it up.

"I thought so," she exulted. "Dat pile er money

en de black 'oman done got on de same side er de line. Dat white man's comin' towards de black 'oman."

She shook the cup again.

"Now, dat white man done gone en dar aint nobody but de black 'oman, de pile er money—"

"Whut dat, whar de pile er money, Mammy?" questioned Tobe.

"Whut you reckin?" she answered enigmatically. "But dem clouds whut's been er hangin' low 'roun' heah is done lif'ed. Why you kin mos' see de sunshine."

She held the cup toward Tobe, but he shook his head.

"I hope you knows, Mammy, but I don' see no sunshine."

He hadn't much confidence in his mother's ability to read the future, but her words of encouragement had acted on his mercurial spirits and they went up with a bound.

The next morning, as he rode across the dewey pasture, the world seemed entirely too good for anything wrong to happen to the man he had always called "Ol' Ma'ster", although it was many years after the emancipation of the slaves. Tobe sang as he rode and thought of the many kindnesses he had received at the hands of William Rayford.

"He's kinder ter de niggers on his fa'm dan mos' men is ter dey own famblies," Tobe mused as he rode. "En I bet Mammy is 'bout right. God aint gwine ter let nuffen happen ter es good er man es dat."

Tobe had never heard of Socrates, but his philosophy was very much like that of the Sage of Athens, when he said: "I am persuaded that no harm can come to a good man, living or dead." And when he reached Uncle Abner, who was bending low over the work of setting his plow he began expounding this doctrine.

"Unc' Abner, I don' b'liebe nothin' wrong gwine ter happen ter es good er man es Ol' Ma'ster. Sumpen gwine ter—"

"Dar you go," snapped Uncle Abner, "er chasin' rainbo's des lak' Ol' Ma'ster hese'f. Guess you t'ink dat ore gwine ter twis' hitse'f outen de groun', make hitse'f inter i'on, en make ernuf money fer ter sabe dis lan' when hit done bin leveled on. I met dat ba'liff dis mawnin' er grinnin' like er possum. I wish I could er kilt him." After this statement Abner went back to beating on his plow, with some of the force he would like to have spent on the head of the bailiff.

"Dat sholy is er onnery white man," he muttered as he drove the bolt into place. "'I done leveled on

dis lan', ' he said es I met him; I aint said nuffen yit. I aint ready fer te 'vite people ter mer own fun-'ral."

"I gwine ter de house," said Tobe as he turned his horse's head toward home, and rode back over the meadow to where Mandy bent over the wash tub.

"Better git er move on whuteber it wus you see in dem coffee groun's las' night, Mammy. Dey done leveled on Ol' Ma'ster's lan'."

"Whut dat?"

Mandy stood up and wiped her hands on her apron.

"Done leveled on de whole place, lan', stocks, wagins, buggies, cows, ebryt'ing."

Tobe did nothing by halves. When he told a tale he made it worth listening to.

"Dey 'cluded Ol' Mistis' house'old en kitchen furnitu'," he continued.

Mandy had untied her apron and was adjusting the bandana that encircled her head.

"Don' you worry, Tobe," she admonished; "you des go back ter de fiel'. I'm gwine ter see whut all dis 'sturbance am erbout."

Tobe obeyed his mother's direction and went back to the field, but he could not cease his worry. His

fertile imagination pictured all sorts of dire disasters coming to the man he worshipped.

"Ef Mr. Marvin knowed his daddy wus in tr'uble, I boun' he'd come home fas' as he could git heah. But dat's des like Ol' Ma'ster; he won't let on dat he need no he'p. Hit's too late ter holloa when de debil got yo', er de ba'liff either."

Tobe continued to talk to himself, and to Uncle Abner, when he could get the older man to break the sullen silence into which he had fallen, after his passionate abuse of the bailiff.

All the long evening he continued his rambling talk, his mind full of all sorts of forebodings. But still he was unprepared for the tragic countenance of his master, when he came face to face with him in the barn lot, after the day's work was done.

William Rayford's thin, eager face was gray, his eyes blood-shot and blazing with passion. He trembled as he carried the basket of corn to the stable for his little mare, that he always fed with his own hands.

"Let me do dat, O'l Ma'ster," said Tobe gently, taking the basket from his hand.

Mr. Rayford almost dropped the basket from the shock of being brought so suddenly back from his brooding thoughts. He relinquished the basket

without a word or a smile, and followed Tobe to the stable door.

"It's that damn Hackett," he muttered as Tobe came out of the stable, speaking to the negro boy as one who talks to himself only to ease the burning anger that scorched his brain.

"He's fuller of lies than Satan himself. He kept telling me that there was mineral; that he would get a buyer. Now when the mortgage is due, he says that the mineral is no account; that he has made the test and that it does not pan out. He's a damn liar—I know he's a liar. I wish I could kill him," he raved.

With a shiver Tobe stepped backward out of the line of his master's vision. The look in the wild eyes frightened him. This was a man he had never seen. The kind, gentle, whimsical master was gone and a raving maniac stood before him. Tobe was torn between the desire to stay and lend his master the sympathy of his mere presence and the negro's natural fear of the mentally unbalanced. His love conquered and he stood, waiting patiently for the passion to spend itself.

After a few moments he was rewarded by hearing his master say in his usual voice:

"Forget that, Tobe. I was a fool, but I am all broken up. I hate to see what I have worked so

hard to save, taken from me by a dirty trickster. I could save it yet, if I had time, but they have made the levy. I am ruined, completely and utterly ruined." His voice rose, threatening again to break into angry ravings.

"How much would hit take ter pay dat mor'-gage?" Tobe asked, more from a desire to bring his master back to realities than for information.

"I could stave it off with a thousand—that is until I could turn a trick—but it might as well be ten thousand. I am ruined, Tobe, and could not raise enough to buy a sheep—not with Hackett giving the lie to every evidence of mineral on the place. No one believes in it."

"I does, Ma's William. I b'liebes in hit ernuf fer ter sabe hit, too. Mandy gwine ter sabe yo' min'ral, Ol' Ma'ster."

Mandy had come softly through the waning light, and stood at his elbow before she had been observed.

Mr. Rayford turned toward her, a slight smile breaking through the gloom that clothed his face. Mandy had always been a favorite, and his kindly heart was touched by her childish promise, futile though he thought it to be.

"I wish you might, Mandy," he answered "then, we could grow old in comfort, I and you and

Miss Sallie. We have about earned our day's rest, but—"

His voice broke.

"Look heah, Ma's William! "

Mandy had untied the knot in the corner of her gingham apron and was holding toward him a huge paper-wrapped parcel.

"See ef hit's all heah, Ma's William. Dat man in de bank, he count hit twice en he say 'twus ernuf—"

"What's that?" Mr. Rayford held a hand for the package.

"Take hit," said Mandy, wearily, "I's mos' ti'ed ter deaf. I done walk ter Rome en back since dinner, en Ma's John Runnels in dat big bank, he say 'twus ernuf fer ter pay dat mor'gage."

Mandy dropped upon the watering trough and sat watching understanding break into the tired brain of her master.

"Mammy say she gwine ter sabe dat lan'. " Tobe was again hilarious. His spirits had shot up at the sight of the bills.

"Count hit, Ol' Ma'ster, en see ef Mammy sho' nuf got ernuf ter pay dat mor'gage. Glory be, I b'lebe she got er million dollars in dat bundle."

Mr. Rayford stood half dazed, hesitating to open the package and thus destroy the mirage that had

been called into existence by the improbable words of the negro woman.

Tobe danced, first on one foot and then the other, while Mandy sat perfectly still, her brooding eyes on the face of her master.

At last, he began to count the money, slowly at first, then more eagerly, then feverishly:

"One hundred, two hundred, three hundred—" Unable to go ahead, he thrust the package into Tobe's hands. "There, boy, count that damn money. I believe I am crazy."

"This can't be true," he kept muttering, rubbing his hand across his eyes; "this can't be true, Mandy, where—in the name of God, where did you get that money?"

"Ma's William," she began slowly, "does you 'member whut de Bible say erbout bread cas' upon de waters? Well, dat's de harves' o' de bread you cas' upon de waters, when Sam die, en you give we-alls dat lan'. You said hit didn't hab no min'ral on hit, but dat hit would make cotton, en hit sho' did. Hit make sumpen else, too. Las' yeah, dat sneakin' white man, Hackett, comes ter we-alls' house en say he wan'er make er tes' fer ter see ef de vein o' min'ral he fin' on yo' lan' run dat fur. When I let him make de tes' he des went wil' fer dat lan.' He offer me dis en he offer me dat, but somehow I don' trus'

dat man. By en by, he kep' on 'twell I went ter see Ma's John Runnels, in de big bank in Rome, 'case I nus' Ma's John, when he wus er baby. En he 'low, 'Mandy, you des hol' onter dat lan' en I'll see 'bout hit fer you.' Shortly atter dat, he sont er man down heah fer ter make de tes', en he 'low dat i'on ore run clear inter de bowels o' de e'rth, en he boun' you got er hundred acres des like hit."

"I aint neber sed nuffen 'bout hit twell terday, 'case I don' know nuffen 'bout er ore mine, en I does know 'bout a cotton patch, en dat cotton patch wus hard ter beat. But when Tobe come home en tol' me dey done leveled on yo' lan', I puts my foot in de road en I goes ter Rome. En, now' I don' sol' Ma's John de min'ral intrus' in my lan fer two thousand dollars en whut he call er roy'lty. En I brung you de money, Ma's William, 'case hits yo's enyway."

"No, Mandy, no! "

Mr. Rayford had dropped upon his knees where he stood, and his thin bent shoulders shook with the dry hard sobs of a man.

"I am saved," he sobbed, brokenly, falteringly, as if his brain feared to take hold of the fact. "You have saved me from ruin, Mandy, and now Miss Sallie and I can grow old in peace. The children—our children, Mandy, and your children, can be happy, and the little—"

"Yas, sar," crooned Mandy, "I knows whut you gwine ter say, Ma's William. You gwine ter say dat all de li'l orfens kin hab er home."

"Le's build er orfen's home, Ol' Ma'ster," interrupted Tobe, "en hab quarters in de back fer de li'l black ones."

"Good," said Mr. Rayford, who was beginning to get his poise again. "A good suggestion, Tobe. But now I must go tell Miss Sallie that Mandy has saved the day."

"Come on, Mammy," said Tobe, "I tol' you dat nuffen bad could happen ter es good er man es Ol' Ma'ster. Come, le's go eat supper, en see ef dem coffee groun's is got eny mo' tales ter tell like dat one."

LOVE AND POLITICS

LOVE AND POLITICS

IT was a pleasant October evening in the year of our Lord 1880. The sun had dropped behind the highest peak of Turkey Mountain, and the twilight of the short autumn day was rapidly covering the little valley with a blanket of shadows.

A tall, deep-chested negro boy came from the spacious barn, situated near the center of the Markham plantation, and with a sedate step went toward the little cabin in the back yard of the Markham home.

Alex walked like a man in deep thought, his head bowed and his hands clasped at his back, a posture he had recently acquired from a leader of his race, at whose feet he had been sitting, until his mind resembled nothing so much as a mystic maze. Everywhere he turned he walked into a familiar shape, a deep-seated sense of gratitude, an inherent loyalty, or the plain teachings of his old mother, who had recently departed this life.

"You stick ter yo' white folks, Alex," she had said, "en dey will stick ter you. You is des er ignut nigger boy, en when you wants ter know whut is right, you ax Ol' Ma'ster er Mr. Rob."

Alex had kept this advice pretty well, up to this

time, but a new and novel situation had arisen. He had joined the "Emancipated Sons of Ham," and night after night, he had been sitting at the feet of a leader, who told him how weak and pusillanimous was the man, white or black, who "sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage."

In 1880, the White Primary had never been thought of in the State of Georgia, and the members of Alex's race were wearing the vesture of citizenship with a sense of overwhelming dignity.

Now, as Alex walked slowly toward his cabin he rolled the high-sounding phrases of the political leader of his race over and over in his mind until his head ached. But all that he was able to make of them was that, if he voted like Mr. Rob Markham wanted him to, he would be "selling his birth-right for a mess of pottage;" but if he went against Mr. Rob and with Ranse Jordan, the leader, to whom he had been listening, that he would be a "forth-right up-standing citizen." Just why it took going against the best friend he ever had, to be an "up-right" citizen Alex could not see. But Ranse Jordan had said so, and Ranse could have nothing in his mind but the desire to educate and uplift his race. So Alex's poor over-worked brain mulled over the problem he had to face.

He was no nearer a solution, when he reached

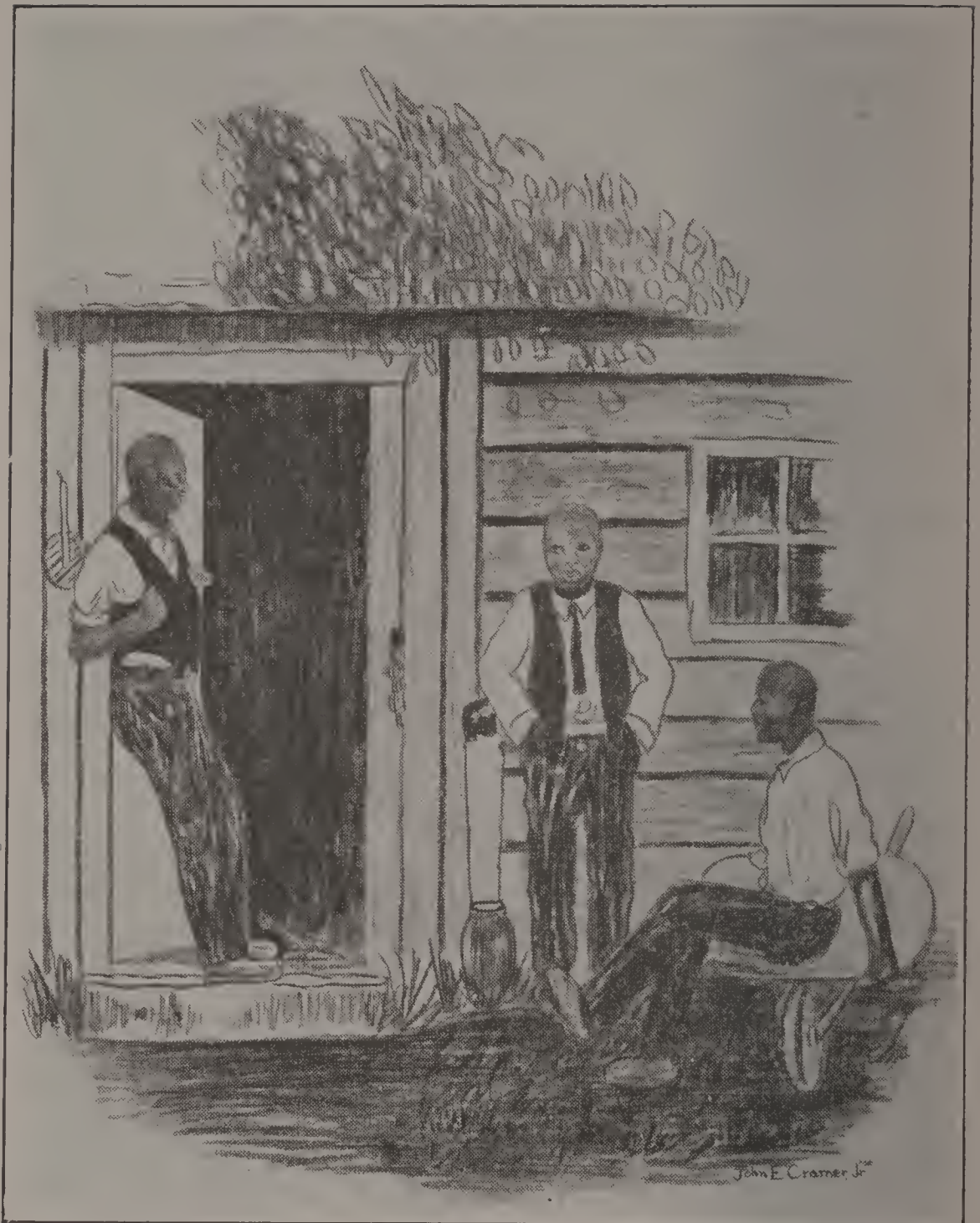
the little cabin, where, since his mother's death, he was living with his two younger brothers. Simon, the youngest of the three, dwarfish, and regarded as a half-wit, was busy preparing the evening meal as Alex entered. He did not look up from his work, but went on talking monotonously to himself, as his brother stood in the doorway looking silently out upon the growing twilight.

"Whut you mouthin' 'bout, nigger?" Alex asked, at last, as he turned toward Simon and stood watching him as he deftly turned the "hot-cakes" he was cooking for supper.

"Nuffen," grumbled Simon, "'cep' I wus des sayin' dat ev'rything dat go wrong on dis place I gits blamed fer hit. Now you en Jerry is bof fine fellers wid Ol' Ma'ster, but Simon is des er fool, en he do dis en he do dat. I aint neber got no res' since I wus big ernuf ter squeeze baby chickuns ter def."

"Whut has Simon done now?" laughed Alex, "fergit ernuder bucket whut he done been sont 'spressly fer ter git?"

"Naw," snapped Simon. He was rather irritable over any reference to the fact that he had been heard deliberately planning to "fergit dat bucket", a few weeks before. "Naw, I aint fergit nuffen, but one o' Miss Markham's dominickers done been



—“dat’s er priv’lege dat’s done bin del’gated ter we-alls by de gov’mint, ’spite er race, color, er prevus condition o’ serbitude.”

kilt—guess Beecher stomp on 'im—en she low she boun' Simon kilt 'im."

He turned back to the stove and gave his attention to the supper he was preparing, but continued to mutter to himself, completely ignoring his brother, who stood watching him with a good-natured smile on his face.

"I bet you right now, ef God A'mighty wus ter die," continued Simon, "dat somebody would want ter blame Simon."

"You sho' is er crazy nigger," laughed Alex, turning to the door as Jerry, the other brother, entered.

"I bet you don't know who's up ter de big house," said Jerry, showing his teeth in a broad grin.

"Mr. Rob," answered the two in chorus.

"Whut did he say, Jerry?" continued Alex.

"He say it wus 'bout 'lection time." Jerry's grin broadened. "Dat boy sho is er sight. He allus talkin' 'bout 'lections."

"Co's', he is," interrupted Alex, speaking as one of superior knowledge, "co's' he is, a man's allus thinkin' 'bout polertics ef he's got eny sense."

"He mought be thinkin' 'bout love," said Simon with a sly grin. "I see you hol' o' some one's han', Sunday."

The remark was ignored, as it deserved to be by

a man who had his mind on such serious things as politics and elections.

"Mr. Rob is making speeches ober de deestricter fer Judge Breen," Alex remarked, addressing himself to Jerry.

"I boun' Mr. Rob could make er speech whut 'd make er man vote fer de Debil ef he wus runnin' fer office." surmised Jerry.

"'Twouldn't me!" Alex was indignant. "Ef you gwine ter vote, you got ter know sumpen 'bout politics. You can't let yo'se'f be led 'round like sheep."

"I'd vote fer enybudy whut Mr. Rob want me to," said Simon stolidly; "aint nobody eber been es good ter me es Mr. Rob."

"Uh huh," said Alex, throwing out his broad chest and preening himself on his superior mental stamina. "Dat's des de tr'uble wid we-alls, now, so many niggers let de'se'ves be led 'round by de white folks. Now, I aint got nuffen 'gin de white folks, speshly dese white folks out heah. Miss Markham en de whole fambly been moughty good ter we-alls, eber since Mammy move heah, en when folks is good ter me I wants ter 'taliat by bein' good ter dem. But, when it comes ter votin', dat's diffunt. Dat's er pertacklar sort o' thing—dat's er priv'lege dat's done been del'gated ter we-alls by

de gover'mint, 'spite er race, color er prevus condition o' serbitude."

Simon suddenly emitted a loud guttaw.

"You sho'ly does know how hit's done, Alex. You been larnin' moughty fas' ober at dem meetin's in Pine-Pitch. You got mos' es meny wuds on de end o' yo' tongue right now es ole man Ranse Jordan."

Alex grinned sheepishly. He had been quoting liberally from the political leader, but that was a small matter to his way of thinking.

"How's a man gwine ter talk 'cepin' he use de same wuds whut 'nuther man done used?" he fenced. "I done been thinkin' dem same things all mer life, des aint neber happen ter 'spress merself in dem same wuds, tell I heah Brur Jordan say 'em."

And in that he did not differ greatly from many wiser men than he.

"It's moughty easy ter say er thing, atter it done been said," muttered Simon. "Now, dar's Mr. Rob, you reckon whar he heah all dem wuds he uses in dem speeches o' his'n? Why, he aint neber heah 'em. He des make 'em up in his haid es he go 'long. Dar aint no books in de worl' got all dem wuds in 'em. I done heah him speak ober ter Lake Creek en I bet he say mo' dan er million."

"Dat nigger done 'plum 'stracted," said Alex, turning to Jerry. "Let's go down ter de bawn en

see whut Mr. Rob's drivin' en see whut he got in de back o' dat buggy."

They knew, from experience, that young Rob Markham out campaigning did usually carry something in the back of his buggy. Not to buy votes with. Perish the thought! Such things were not done in Georgia politics, but the voters of the country still drank and still smoked, and a good brand of either whiskey or tobacco was thought to be effective in laying a man's mind open to reason. And young Markham was supposed to carry a good brand of that, also.

After supper was over, Rob went down to the little cabin, where the Johnson negroes, who worked his father's farm, lived.

"How are you, boys?" he asked as he stepped into the little cabin, smiling his magnetic smile, which was proving to be such an asset in the campaign.

"Come right in, Mr. Rob." Alex was always spokesman for the family. "Simon, han' Mr. Rob dat cheer."

Rob took the proffered chair, and sat looking about the bare little cabin.

"I miss Aunt Sallie something awful," he said, at last "why don't you get married, Alex? Where is that chocolate colored girl I saw you with last summer?"

Alex showed his teeth in a pleasant grin. "Dat's 'bout de bestest lookin nigger gal in dat town, Mr. Rob, but I 'spec' she gwine ter want er yaller nigger whut wears biled shuts."

"Not if she is as sensible as she looks," laughed Rob. "Tell me where she works, Alex, and I will speak a good word for you."

"She's de house girl at Judge Breen's."

"Oh!" said Rob, and fell to thinking.

"Dem sho' is fine shoes you got on, Mr. Rob," said Simon calculatigly, eyeing the shoes Rob had on. "I 'spec' you'll be gittin' you some mo' soon."

Rob laughed. "I guess I will have to throw these away when I do. You do not happen to know any one who wears a number seven, do you Simon?"

"You sho'ly is er comical young man, Mr. Rob, you know I done been wearin' yo' ole clo's' eber since I been bawn. Mammy uster say she aint buy me nuffen 'case I could weah yo's."

"All right, Simon," Rob, smiled as he got up to leave, "I will remember about the shoes, and I wouldn't be surprised if I happen to find some more things that you might use."

He took three cigars from his pocket and handed one to each of the boys.

"These will make you sleep well," he said, as he stepped out into the moon-lit night.

"Dat's whut I calls er fus' class gen'man," said Simon, puffing away on his cigar, with the air of a connoisseur. "Dis sho'ly am er fine segar. He is allus givin' we-alls sumpen en not axin' fer a thing."

"I don't know," mused Alex, his face wrinkled up in an effort to think. His mind was full of vague workings. Words of Ranse Jordan came back into his mind, confusing him: "Dem white folks think dat niggers kin be bought wid er segar, er er dime; dat's des whut dey thinks o' we-alls. Dey done driv us es long es dey kin, en now dey tryin' fer ter lead us, but it 'mounts ter de same thing; dey gits us whar dey wants us."

Alex felt disloyal to Rob and to Mr. Markham, when he thought of Ranse Jordan's words. He tried to put them out of his mind and to enjoy his really excellent cigar, but they kept coming back. He would have been happy to have followed his natural bent and gone with Mr. Rob, but when "de sacred franchise done been delergated ter er man" that makes the duty very impressive. He continued to smoke his cigar, but he did not get as much enjoyment out of it as either Jerry or Simon, who admittedly would have voted for the devil if Mr. Rob had asked them. Alex, however, had been awakened to the "high duty of a citizen." Again, he thought in the words of Ranse Jordan.

As Alex continued to smoke, the sacred duty of a citizen grew more and more hazy in his mind, and finally faded altogether, and, notwithstanding he had said a man was always thinking about politics, his mind was filled with visions of the chocolate-colored girl, who was house girl at Judge Breen's.

Ten days later the election came, and the three Johnson boys drove into town early. Simon, resplendent in Rob's old clothes; Jerry, drunk on the general excitement, but Alex, with his superior dignity, went with a serious face. He was soon led away by Ranse Jordan and put in charge of fifty negroes, whom Jordan had been entertaining all night, in the hall owned by the colored Odd Fellows.

"Keep them in heah, Alex," he had admonished "en don't you let a soul up heah. I wants ter march dese boys ter de polls in er body. We gwine ter show dat Breen crowd sumpen fo' dis day am ober."

Alex did not have any trouble in keeping them. They were all either too drunk or too sleepy to want to go away. Poor Alex, however, had a lonesome morning of it. There were some cigars left on the table, and he smoked one of these while he did some hard thinking—if the pitiful workings of his mind could be called thought. He felt keenly the indignity these drunken fellows were casting on

the cause. Jordan had been shrewd enough to get hold of Alex, by appealing to his racial pride, and the inherent honesty of the poor negro boy. He had wrapped him about his very crooked and very dirty political finger, and the result was pitiful. Alex believed with a faith, hitherto unshaken, that Jordan was imbued by a high and holy principle. To him politics was a cause second only to his religion, and he had the racial bent toward piety.

But, now, as he stood looking at the fifty negroes lying in dirty heaps about the room, sleeping off the night's debauch, he began to doubt Jordan; he began to feel that mental nausea common to us all, when we find that the god we have been worshipping is made of a peculiarly dirty brand of mud.

He pulled himself together and went to the window, and stood looking down upon the crowded street. He wished himself out of this dirty room; out in the open air; free to go hunt up the chocolate-colored girl of his dreams. The trend of his thought was suddenly broken by the sight of Rob Markham and his brother Simon, walking up the street in earnest conversation. He stepped quickly back out of sight and watched them. He wished he could hear what they were saying. He would have been seriously disturbed, however, had he known that he was the subject under discussion.

"Where are Alex and Jerry?" Rob was inquiring.

"Jerry, he hangin' 'round de street enjoyin' it like it wus er circus," Simon answered, "but dat Ranse Jordan done got hol' o' Alex. Dey got er hund'ed niggers up dar." He pointed to the hall opposite. "Dey don't want nobody ter git er chance at 'em tell hit's time ter vote."

"How on earth did that crowd get Alex?" asked Rob. "He belongs to us by rights, and I just hate to see Alex made a fool of."

"Ugh!" grunted Simon, in disgust. "Alex's des got ernuf sense ter make er fool outen him. Dat's des de way a li'l sense 'fect er nigger. I des er plain fool nigger, en I knows hit. Alex he got er right smart mo' sense dan I is, but it des make er fool outen him atter all. He done gone en let dat black Ranse Jordan git hol' o' him, en make him b'lebe dat ef he des won't go wid you, dat he will be provin' dat he got too much sense ter be led by de white folks. En Alex, he aint got ernuf sense ter see dat he is bein' led by de white man whut is leadin' Jordan."

Rob laughed. He was surprised at the astuteness with which Simon had grasped the situation.

"I wish I knew how to get hold of Alex," he said, speaking more to himself than to Simon.

Suddenly Simon began to laugh, loudly, boister-

ously, and Rob turned away in disgust. Simon's fit of sanity was over, he thought. He was like the others in regarding Simon as a half-wit. After that day, however, when any one spoke of the vagaries of the negro boy, he insisted that they were simply the eccentricities of genius.

"Wait, Mr. Rob," said Simon, suddenly growing serious. "I boun' I know how you kin make dat nigger lis'n ter reason. Ef we could git hol' o' dat yaller gal ober ter Judge Breen's. Sampson aint de onliest man whut done been drug 'round by the hair o' de haid."

"You just wait here for me, Simon," said Rob, abruptly. And he went hot-footed in search of the dusky Delilah.

It was not so much for the single vote that he was fighting, but he did not want any one "poaching on his preserves", as he expressed it to Clare Breen, who listened with laughing eyes to the story of how they were going after Alex.

Clare lent herself, as he knew she would, earnestly to the project. It took only a few minutes to persuade the "yaller gal", otherwise called Veronica, to join them.

"I gwine ter teach dat nigger ter run 'round wid de riff-raff, en de po' white trash," she muttered, as she sat down and wrote Alex, with many flourishes,

to meet her at the Methodist Church corner in half an hour.

Rob carried the note back to Simon to be delivered, while Clare made Veronica resplendent in a new silk dress and red hair-ribbons.

"How cum you knowed I wus heah, nigger?" asked Alex suspiciously, as he answered Simon's knock at the door.

"Mr. Jordan 'lowed I'd find you heah," answered Simon simply. "I bin huntin' you ter gib you dis note whut Miss Veronica done sont you."

Alex's heart lost a beat as he took the pink-tinted and delicately-perfumed note in his hand. He spelled his way laboriously through it. Then, he looked around at the still sleeping derelicts that covered the floor.

"Simon, can't you keep dis do' locked en not let er soul up heah?"

"Nobudy?" queried Simon.

"Nobudy lessen Brer Jordan come, en den you tell him dat a lady sont fer me, en I wus bleegeed ter go er li'l while. Now, you be sho' ter tell 'im dat hit wus er lady. Do you heah?"

"I sho' will," agreed Simon.

Alex hurried down the steps and across the street to where his lady-love was waiting for him.

"It's moughty kind o' you ter hunt me up, Miss

Veronica.” Alex took off his hat and bowed low. “I ’siders myse’f highly honered dat you con’er-s’ends ter hunt me up. Is you got enything ’spressly fer ter say ter me, Miss Veronica?”

“I sho’ is,” bridled Veronica. “I don’t call gen’-men’s erway fum dey ’portant ’fairs fer ter ’scuss de wedder. I *sho’ is* got sumpen ’spressly ter say ter you. I hunted you up ter tell you dat I aint gwine ter hab no nigger, whut’s keepin’ comp’ny wid me, er runnin’ ’round wid de riff-raff, en de po’ white trash.”

Alex’s lips grew ashy gray.

“Whut dat crazy Simon been tellin’ you?” he asked, angrily, twisting his hat in his hands.

“Simon aint tol’ me nuffen,” she replied, “but I knows you bin runnin’ wid de wrong crowd, en you’s got ter quit hit ef you ’sociates wid me. How cum you can’t stick ter yo’ own white folks, Mr. Rob Markham? He’s er moughty nice young man, en me en Miss Clare laks him mos’ better den eny beau she got. En dat’s how cum I let you pay me yo’ ’spects. Mr. Rob told Miss Clare dat you wus ’bout de bes’ nigger in de county. En now you gwine ter go back on Mr. Rob en vote fer dat riff-raff. Dat’s des ’zactly whut dat man is whut’s runnin’ ’gainst Judge Breen.”

“But you don’t know nuffen ’bout polertics,

Honey," Alex argued. "You aint got no caus' fer ter be trublin' yo' purty haid 'bout sich things. You can't vote."

"No, I can't," snapped Veronica, "but I kin see dat you vote right, en dat 'mounts ter 'bout de same thing."

"But, Honey—"

"But yo' haid 'ginst er rock wall," rasped Veronica. "Guess it wouldn't hu't it," she added, under her breath.

"But I des got ter vote dat way, now, Honey; I des got ter."

"Seein' es how we can't agree, Mr. Johnsin', I guess I better be goin'." She made a move as if to leave.

"Don't go, Veronica," he begged, "Please don't go. I'll—I'll—"

"Ob co's', you will," she cooed, edging up close to him and slipping her hand in his, that lay on the stone steps. "I knowed you loved me too well ter let er li'l thing lak dat 'stu'b our peace."

She adroitly lifted her umbrella and nestled a moment close against his shoulder behind it.

"I gwine ter 'spec you Sunday, Honey, sho'."

Alex got up and walked thoughtfully back to the hall, where the fifty negroes were waking up and growing restless. He went with his shoulders bent

and his eyes troubled, but his head was in a whirl and his heart beat like a trip-hammer. About his beclugged senses hung the heavy perfume of Hudnutt's Violets.

"Dat gal sho'ly do tangle herse'f monstrously close 'bout a man's h'art," he said as he climbed the steps.

"Whar Jordan?" asked a big heavy-set negro as Alex entered.

"Gone down ter de polls. Let's go, now boys."

Like so many sheep they allowed themselves to be formed into line and led down.

At the foot of the steps, Alex was startled to see Veronica, standing not fifty feet away. She had thought it wise not to lose sight of her new recruit.

She gave no sign, but simply turned, and keeping well in front, led the way toward the court house.

It was a picturesque sight—one far ahead of the times in Georgia—to see fifty men led to the polls by a woman. Few, however, who watched the procession, connected Veronica with it in any serious sense. To them she was merely a vain negro girl, parading herself and wantonly flirting with the big, broad-shouldered man, who led the procession.

A hundred yards from the court house, however, something happened to electrify the on-lookers. Veronica stepped up to Alex and whispered:

"Now, you holler fer Judge Breen, *en you holler loud!*"

For a moment, Alex hesitated. Then, suddenly, his head went up. Perhaps it would be hard to say how much he was influenced by his desire to please Veronica, and how much by his inherent love of sensation. Anyway, his head went up and he yelled:

"Hurrah for Judge Breen!"

Fifty voices took up the cry, and in a solid mass the fifty negroes marched toward the polls, still crying for Judge Breen in an united voice that carried far over the little town.

It reached Ranse Jordan across the court house yard. He turned and ran toward Alex, his face distorted with rage.

"Stop dar!" he cried, "Stop dar, you crazy nigger. You done sol' out." He laid his hand on Alex's arm, but the younger man shoved him away with a force that sent him to his knees.

As he rose, he found himself face to face with Rob Markham.

"Shut up," said Rob coolly. "If you touch that boy, or attempt to molest him, after we leave here, I will see what can be done about last night. I know every move that you made."

Jordan turned away and went behind the court

house, grumbling volubly, for he knew that his following was gone.

When Alex had voted his crowd, he turned sheepishly to face Rob Markham. He had begun to suspect that Rob knew something of the scented note.

"You better go hunt up Veronica, Alex," Rob said with a smile; "that is a fine girl, and I hope you get her."

"I done got her," said Alex with a grin, as he went to join Veronica, who stood waiting for him beside a tree on the court house lawn.

AUNT SAVANNAH'S
WHITE FOLKS

AUNT SAVANNAH'S WHITE FOLKS

“SERENA. Hi, Serena!” Aunt Savannah stood in the doorway of the little cabin holding her hand to shade her eyes from the glare of the sun. Her voice, high and quavering, carried to the branch, two hundred yards away, where Serena bent over the wash-tub.

“Mammy gits mighty impatience, when dat co’n pone am done,” she said to herself, but aloud she called:

“Comin’, Mammy, des soon es I gits des clo’s’ in de pot.”

The old woman turned back into the kitchen, and went about placing the simple meal of corn bread, cabbage and black coffee on the little uncovered pine table.

“It aint much dinner,” she mused, “yit I aint got no right ter complain. It’s mo’ dan Miss Lucy got. I des ’bout go crazy when I thinks o’ Miss Lucy.”

“What’s dat, Mammy?” queried the young woman, as she came in at the door; “I sho’ does smell sumpen good.” She raised the lid from the covered

dish on the back of the stove. "I knowed I smelled sumpen 'sides cabbages. Gittin' mighty 'straver-gant, Mammy! Whar'd you git dat briler?"

"Go on 'way frum heah, nigger," said Aunt Savannah; "don't you tech dat chickun; dat aint fer de likes er you; dat's Miss Lucy's chickun."

Serena took her seat, at the table, and helped herself liberally to the cabbage, while she kept her eyes hungrily on the covered dish.

"Dat's des de way wid you, Mammy," she complained, "eberyt'ing you git you allus thinkin' bout dem white folks, en—"

"Sho', I is!" interrupted Aunt Savannah angrily; "dem's *my* white folks. It mighty neer drives me 'stracted ter think er Miss Lucy up dar in dat big hous' wid maybe not ernuf ter eat."

"I don' see no signs er we-alls being foundered," complained Serena.

"Shet up!" snapped Aunt Savannah, in the voice of one who had reached the end of her endurance. "You des es crazy 'bout Miss Lucy es I is."

Serena laughed.

"Co's' I is Mammy: I wus des projickin' wid you ter hear you r'ar. You sho' does think yer white folks is quality, don't you, Mammy?"

"En dey is quality," answered Aunt Savannah, proudly. "Don't I 'member whut a time we-alls

used ter hab in dat big house, when Miss Lucy wus young, and she was de puttiest gal in dis kentry? Ol' Ma'ster en Ol' Miss wus so proud o' dat chil' dat dey 'bout crazy. She had ebryt'ing she want—dat wus fo' Ol' Ma'ster got po'—en now she aint got nuffen. I 'clare fo' God, Serena, I don't see how Ol' Ma'ster en Ol' Miss kin be happy in Heben ef dey see how 'tis back heah."

"Maybe dey don't know," said Serena, consolingly.

"Maybe not," Aunt Savannah acquiesced; "ef dey do, I don't see how dey res' in dey grabes. Des think ef Ol' Ma'ster could see de kerrige hosses go, den de jew'lry he gib de chil', en dat he gib Ol' Miss, de furnitu' eben, all 'scusin' dat she bleege ter hab, done gone! De house she lib in aint hers, dat eben 'longs ter dat onnery Judge Brent. De skinflint!"

"How come he skinflint, Mammy?" Aint he some o' yo' white folks,—aint he Miss Lucy's c'usin?"

"Dat how come I say he skinflint," admitted the old woman, grudgingly. "Sho' he's Miss Lucy's c'usin, en dat de reason he ought ter see dat she hab ernuf ter lib on. He got plenty, God knows! Hit des riles me, when I see dat Miss Brent, what wus er overseer's daughter, en dem red haided gals o' his'n,

gibin' de'se'ves airs, en er ridin' 'round in dat ottermobile, when Miss Lucy is so po' she can't hardly lib. I guess I aint the onlies one what 'members when it wus de odder way, 'cepin' Ol' Ma'ster's folks aint neber gib de'se'ves no airs 'bout nuthin', en dem wid three kerriges, en high steppin' hosses. I tell you dem kerrige hosses des make er ottermobile look cheap es dut. Eberybody kin hab dem things whut wants 'em, but I 'spressly 'fers hosses, dey's de onliest things fer quality. I boun' you dat Ol' Ma'ster wouldn't gib one of dem ill-smellin' things room in his mule bawn. He didn't hab no call ter go runnin' 'round de kentry at break-neck speed; when Ol' Ma'ster sont word dat he wus comin' people wus glad ter wait fer him. He wus a gen'-man, en his pa afo' him—it wus his pa dat own me, when I wus er gal no older den you is. Dat how come I call dem my white folks. Miss Lucy's pa wus des er young man when de wah break out, but he got ter be er Cap'ain 'fo long. It wus de fust year o' de wah dat he ma'y Miss Lucy en bring her home ter we-alls, en f'um dat day on hit wus Miss Lucy whut own me, body en soul. Talk erbout bein' sot free, when a body own you like dat, dar aint no sich thing es being sot free! Es fer es dat go I hed all de freedom I want es long es Miss Lucy, whut wus de mother o' de Miss Lucy you

know, lib. It wus atter she die dat I done been slabin' all mer life.

"I 'clare fo' God, Serena, I aint neber see nuthin' es prutty es mer young Miss wus, les it wus er flower wid de light o' de mawnin' on hit, fo' hit shed de dew, dat wus des de way she look, all fresh and sparkly like. En er engil in Hebin couldn't be better den she wus ter we-alls. Dat how come I can't stand ter see her li'l girl suffer."

The old woman's voice had grown husky with emotion, and two big tears had gathered in her eyes and threatened to overflow.

"Den you better not be settin' dar tell dat briler spile," said Serena, briskly. "Go fix yer'se'f up, while I knocks tergedder a few o' mer cream biskits ter go wid dat briler."

Serena prided herself on her culinary art, and as she went about her work, her face shone and she broke into song.

"Dem biskits ready?" Aunt Savannah suddenly appeared in the doorway, and so great was the transformation she had made in her appearance that it was hard to believe that she was the same old negro, who, a moment before, had resembled nothing so much as a ragged effigy set up in some corn field. Now, the rags had been laid aside, and she wore a neat gingham dress; a big apron, snowy

white and as smooth as glass; a white 'kerchief, a relic of the past, was crossed over her shoulders, and pinned with a big oval brooch.

"Does I look pros'pr'ous ernuf?" she asked with a grin of pardonable pride.

"'Fo' God, Mammy, you look like de Queen o' Sheba," said Serena, showing her thirty-two teeth in a broad grin. And from some unaccountable place, she brought forth a damask tray-cloth, with which she covered the tin tray, on which she placed the tenderly broiled chicken and the beaten biscuits.

"Dar, dat am fit fer er king, en de Queen o' Sheba gwine ter ca'y hit," Serena laughed as she handed the tray to her mother.

"I 'clare fo' God, Mammy, you would sell your soul fer Miss Lucy! Dar you go now wid de onliest dress you's had fer five years, des saved fer ter weah ter Miss Lucy's, en de las' chickun ole Spec done raised dis summer—en de Lawd knows whar de nex' one comin' f'um," she added seriously. Then, the grin came back:

"En I boun' you tell mo' lies dis day dan An'nias en Safira."

"But I boun' I don' get struck down dead," said Aunt Savannah defiantly. "Hit aint no hawm ter lie ter er po' sick soul like Miss Lucy, when it comforts her."

Aunt Savannah turned and walked sedately up the hill, to where the old Sherwood home, once dignified by the grandiose title of mansion, stood, now so weather-beaten and dilapidated as to be hardly habitable.

The old woman let herself in at the back, and made her way silently to the room, which had once been the library, but now served Miss Lucy as library, living room and bed room, with space to spare.

In one corner, reclining in a big chair, almost big enough to serve as bed for the very little lady who occupied it, sat Miss Lucy. Her face, which must have been, years before, very much like Savannah's description of her young mistress—"a flower wid de light o' mawnin' on hit 'fo hit sheds de dew," lit up with the wraith of a smile, as she saw Aunt Savannah standing in the doorway.

"How is you terday, Honey?" the old voice held those wonderfully tender, crooning tones, which we sometimes hear in those of her race, bending over children.

"About as usual," smiled Miss Lucy.

"You gwine ter eat dis nice chickun, Mammy done bring you, en des nice cream biskits Serena done cook 'spressly fer you." She put the tray down on a little table, gave it a few deft touches and wheeled it within reach.

"Dar!" she said triumphantly, "don't dat look good?"

"It certainly does." Tears were in Miss Lucy's voice. "Sometimes, I wonder how Elijah felt when the ravens came. God sends you just as surely, but you must not deny yourself, Mammy. It must be hard to find chicken at this time of year."

"'Deed it taint," the old woman assured her, "you des ought ter see dat big brood in mer back ya'd right now, en mer pantry es mos' full o' jelly en stuff es Miss' uster be. Don't you worry 'bout me, Honey, I'se all right. Sam, dat boy whut you 'members es sich a onnery little nigger, done growed up, en you would be s'prised ter see whut a good 'vider he makes. No, Honey, I aint denyin' merse'f nuffen."

Aunt Savannah paused for breath. She be-thought her of Ananias and Saphira, but she did not listen for the feet of the young men. "It aint no hawm ter lie like dat," she whispered to herself, and the relieved smile in Miss Lucy's eyes was balm to her conscience.

"But, how about you, Miss Lucy?" she queried. "Is you got whut you need—medicine, fruit, wine? Anyt'ing you need, I'll fin' hit sum way. I'll des sabe er li'l o' dat whut me en Serena wastes on

dem movies. Dey's monstrous funny, but dey aint good fer de eyes."

Aunt Savannah had seen one in her life and the memory still lingered.

"No, no," Miss Lucy hastened to object, "I will do very well now. There is nothing I have to have that you do not bring me. Last week I sold a mother-of-pearl picture frame—the one I had on my dressing table so long, Mammy—but, I still have the picture." Her voice broke.

"My po' chil', " groaned Aunt Savannah, "why didn't you let me know? I could 've done sumpen. My po' li'l chil'."

"When I am stronger," Miss Lucy continued, "Mrs. Green wants me to coach her little girl so that she will pass her grade in Latin, but I am too weak yet."

"Yas'm," crooned Aunt Savannah, as she sat stroking the thin blue-veined hand. Inwardly she was boiling. "Nice kind people nuffen," she was thinking, "dey wants mer po' sick chil' ter beat some Latin inter de haid o' dat gal, en she aint fit fer er do' mat fer Miss Lucy!"

At last when Miss Lucy had eaten every bite that Aunt Savannah could urge on her, and had been made as comfortable as possible, Aunt Savannah made her way home with a troubled face.

"Dat chil' is growin' weaker en weaker, en hit aint right dat she aint got somebody ter keep keer o' her, 'sides me. Dar aint nobody 'longs ter Miss Lucy, but Jedge Brent, en Miss Lucy is prouder den Lucifer. Dis am er mighty ticklish business, nigger, but sumpen's got ter be done, en hits got ter be done quick."

She went on past the cabin, stopping long enough to set the tray of dishes inside the door, and went to join Serena, at the wash-place. She dropped wearily down on a stump, where Serena had been "battling" clothes.

"Look out, Mammy, you gwine ter spile dem visitin' clo's'!"

"Shut up," snapped Aunt Savannah, jumping up with alacrity; "dese clo's' gwine ter out las' Miss Lucy yit, ef sumpen aint done."

She walked slowly up and down the branch, her wrinkled hands working convulsively at her side. Her mind was filled with vague, half-shaped thoughts, always, of ways and means to help Miss Lucy, for whom she would, as Serena had said, have sold her soul. She could get hold of nothing tangible, and she continued her restless paces, talking to herself as she walked:

"I done rastled tell my strength mos' gone. I des got ter fin' somebody ter he'p."

Suddenly she came to a halt before Serena.

"Did you eber heah o' sich a man es Dan'l?" she queried.

"Yas'm," Serena was frankly puzzled.

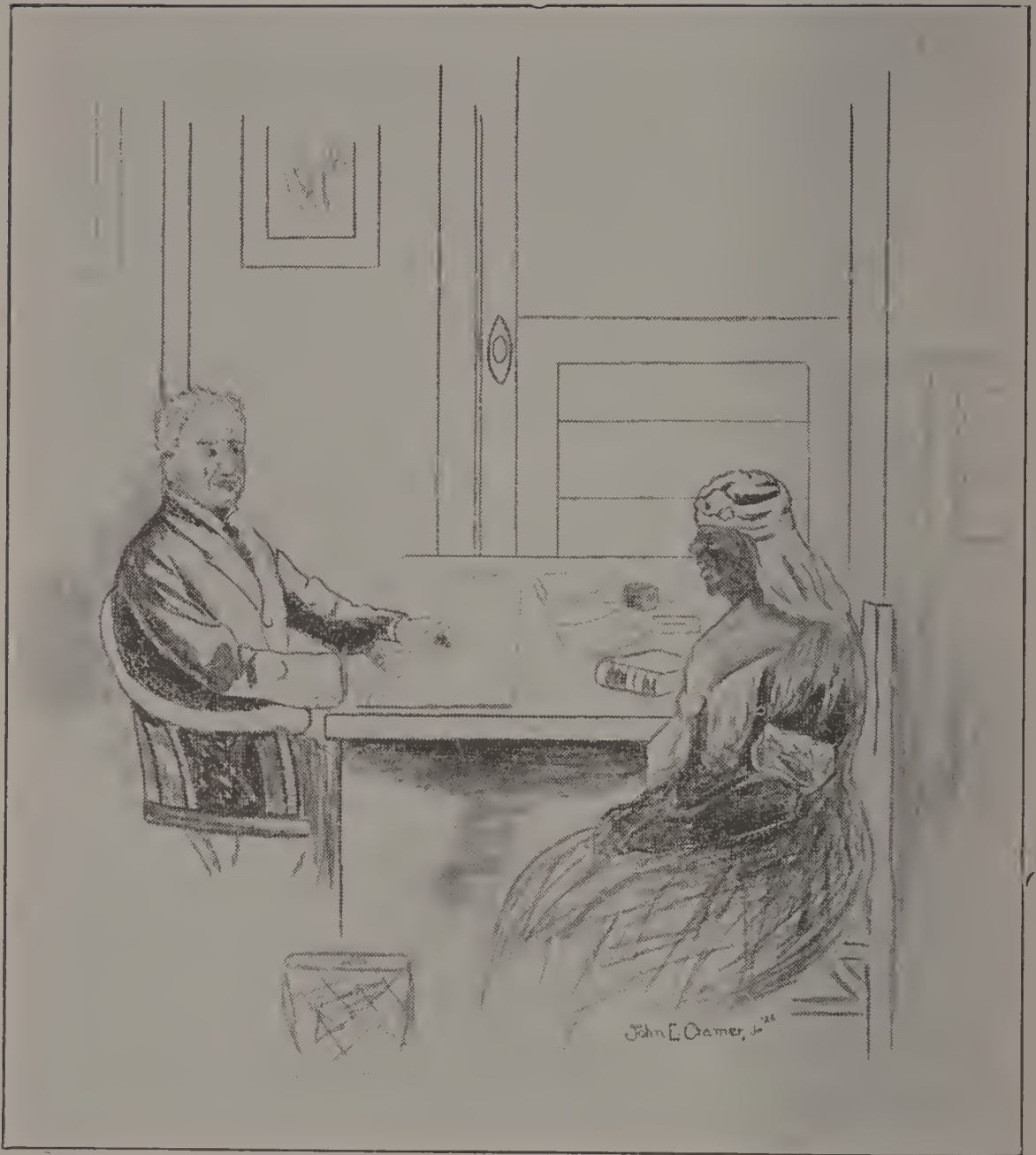
"En how he bearded de lions in dey dens?"

"Yas'm," Serena was beginning to see light. She had thought that Dan'l might be somebody to whom Aunt Savannah thought of going for assistance, but, now she saw that her grandmother was only dealing in her accustomed figure of speech.

"Well, he come out erlive," continued Aunt Savannah, "en I reckon Jedge Brent can't eat me."

With that she turned and walked as fast as her years, which were making themselves felt in her stiffened joints, would permit. She went in the direction of Judge Brent's office.

She was out of breath, when that dignified and formidable person let her in. And, as she sat fighting for breath, she felt the courage that had boosted her up, oozing from every pore of her skin. She had come filled with a righteous indignation, bent on telling Judge Brent what she thought of him, for ignoring one of his own blood as he had ignored Miss Lucy. And, now, that she was face to face with him, she was frightened. She did not know what frightened her more—the thought that she might let this man know more



*"Dar am er heap o' dut, er heap o' dut, en de people do lib
so raggedy."*

than Miss Lucy would have him know, or that she might not be able to tell him enough.

It was Judge Brent who broke the silence.

"What can I do for you, Auntie?" His voice was gruff, but not unkind. "Did you come about Sam?"

It was not a propitious beginning. Aunt Savannah was not proud of Sam, who was serving a ten-year sentence in the penitentiary, and she hoped that, during this interview, it would be ignored.

"No, sah, I didn't come 'bout Sam," she said humbly. "I 'spec Sam's 'bout whar he ought ter be, Ma's Henry. Dat sholy is er onnery nigger, ef he is my gran'son. Dis am gettin' ter be er mighty bad worl', Ma's Henry," she added solemnly. "Dar am er heap o' dut, er heap o' dut, en de people do live so raggedy!"

"You are right, Aunt Savannah," Judge Brent smiled. "And it is not only your race, who live raggedly, either."

"'Deed it aint," said Aunt Savannah, warmly. "Hit look like white folks oughter hab ernuf sense fer to live right, but sometimes hit 'pears like dey's mos' es bad es we-alls. But I allus been mighty proud o' my white folks, Ma's Henry."

The old diplomat smiled ingratiatingly.

"Whar you gwine ter fin' any mo' folks like mer folks, en you's, Ma's Henry? You sho' does look mighty like yo' pa, en he wus des like mer. Ol' Ma'ster, his brudder."

"I wonder what the old croon wants?" the Judge thought, but he only slipped his feet further under his desk, settled himself more comfortably in his chair and waited patiently.

"I wus des tellin' Miss Lucy terday, how I 'membered de time when you uster allus be ober ter our house, en how you en her uster set so much sto' by wun ernudder. My! warnt she fine, Ma's Henry? Allus at your heels, des like she wus yer shadder."

The old woman paused. She did not hear the feet of the young men, but she trembled in her shoes. She did not care how much or how long she lied, she only prayed that the Judge would not remember enough to know that she lied. She watched his face furtively and saw nothing to alarm her. Perhaps he had accepted her words as literally true. So vague, sometimes, are men's memories, that the things they have dreamed of are, often, more real than the things they have done. The Judge's face softened and his eyes grew dreamy. Perhaps, they were seeing after all these years, the little golden-haired cousin, who

danced through all the dreams of his boyhood with the elusiveness of a will-o'-the-wisp. Any way, as Aunt Savannah watched his face, she gathered courage to go on.

"Hit's mighty lonesome fer Miss Lucy, since Ol' Miss done been tuk, en she mighty poly herse'f, Miss Lucy is."

Suddenly under the stress of her great need, Aunt Savannah threw precaution to the wind, and into the Judge's astonished ears she poured her pitiful tale. She told it all in her broken, confused way, of how Miss Lucy had proudly hidden from the world the fact that her father had left her nothing; how she had scrimped and saved; how she had sold things,—luxuries first, comforts next then necessities, until, now, she sat there in the old house, face to face with dire need, but still too proud to call on her only surviving relative for help.

"I 'clare 'fo' God, Ma's Henry," the old woman ended suddenly, "I don' see how you let dat chil' set dar by herse'f, en her mos' sick unter def, en nuffen ter eat in de house 'cepin' whut I ca'y her."

Judge Brent sat up, the dreamy look gone from his eyes, and looked searchingly into the old woman's face.

"Suppose you tell me just what you mean," he said simply. "You seem to be blaming me, some way, for Miss Lucy's sufferings. God knows she has never given me any sign that she needed me, or wanted me. If she had—"

"Dat's dis hit," interrupted the old woman, "she aint gwine ter gib you no sign. Dat's des her pride. Ef she knowed whut I wus doin' now, I boun' she would neber speak ter me agin. But I des couldn't he'p hit, Ma's Henry. Terday I cooked de las' chickun I got, en Serena she make cream biskits outen de las' dus' o' flour in de house. Dat don't make no diffunce es fer es we-alls consarned, but whar Miss Lucy's brilers and cream biskits gwine ter come f'um is whut I wants ter know. Dat's how comes I's heah, Ma's Henry."

"I didn't know! As God is my witness, I didn't know," said Judge Brent earnestly. "I have been so busy. Sometimes, I hardly know what my own people are doing. But now that you have shown me that something must be done, suppose you tell me what I can do. Miss Lucy is not going to be easy to do things for, if I remember right."

"Dat she aint," acquiesced Aunt Savannah, "but it aint fer me to be telling you what and how to do, Ma's Henry. I knowed ef I could des make you see dat sumpen ought ter be done dat you would fin'

er way, en I knowed hit would be de right way. My white folks don't neber do things by ha'ves."

"Yes, I must find a way," the judge said musingly, but until I do, here is something with which to buy Miss Lucy's 'brilers'."

He put his hand in his pocket and handed her a bill, which she tucked into her 'kerchief without so much as a look at the denomination.

"Thank you kindly, Ma's Henry, en I gwine ter trus' you ter fin' er way."

With an old-fashioned curtsy she was gone.

Quickly she made her way back home, her face wreathed in smiles.

"Look heah," she said triumphantly, as she walked into the cabin, where Serena bent over an ironing board. "Look here whut Ma's Henry done gib me fer ter buy things fer Miss Lucy." She took the bill from her 'kerchief, and for the first time looked at the denomination. The one hundred was no surprise to her.

"En she gwine ter hab eberything she need now. I wouldn't be 'sprised ef Ma's Henry tak' her up ter his big house ter lib in luxury like she uster."

"Who? Dat skinflint Judge Brent?" queried Serena.

Aunt Savannah turned on her furiously.

"Don't you call none o' *my* white folks skinflint, nigger!"

UNCLE LIGE PLEADS
HIS OWN CASE

UNCLE LIGE PLEADS HIS OWN CASE

IT was Monday morning, January 1, 1916. In the court room there was gathered the same people you will find any Monday morning at the regular session of the Mayor's Court of Camden. There were the half dozen young lawyers, who were still glad enough of the fees to be gained from such cases, the City Attorney, Jack Marsden, and Dan Herndon, the young Mayor.

Besides these, there were the usual prisoners. If not the same prisoners, at least the same types.

Dan Herndon let his keen gray eyes run over the room, speculatively, and so well did he know the types, that he felt it would be easy to dispense justice without the evidence in each case.

He settled himself in his chair and was reaching for his gavel, when his eyes fell on a prisoner of an altogether different type, an old negro of the *ante-bellum* variety, wearing a long broadcloth coat, much the worse for service, but neatly brushed and darned, showing a wide expanse of white shirt front, and a black stock of the style of the early sixties. The old face framed by snow white hair,

was as black as it is possible for a human face to be, and so wrinkled and wizened as to resemble an old parchment burned black, but, withal, so kindly that one found it hard to mistrust its owner.

"Uncle Lige, by all that's holy!" murmured the Mayor to the City Attorney, who was leaning on his desk. "What is the charge?"

"Selling whiskey," answered Marsden.

"I am from Missouri," whispered Herndon. "Uncle Lige never had enough whiskey to sell in his life, and it isn't against the law to drink it yet."

"More's the pity," snapped Marsden.

"You'll have to have a darn good case, before I believe you," laughed the Mayor.

"We have it!" exulted Marsden.

The Mayor took up the gavel and court was called to order. Dan Herndon had only a hazy recollection of the first part of the session. He presided from force of habit, while his mind was filled with conjectures regarding Uncle Lige. He had known the old negro all his life and found it hard to believe that he would do anything that he thought was wrong, but he knew the race well enough to understand the vagaries of mind and conscience common to them all, and in his mind lurked the fear that the old man had been made the cat-paw of some shrewd young negro.

There also lurked in his mind the suspicion that this might be a cleverly concocted scheme to embarrass him in the oncoming election, in which he was being opposed for Mayor by a man who was fanatical on the question of prohibition. Dan, himself, was not "wet," but his sympathy for offenders on certain occasions was being used against him in a telling way.

"Might as well not arrest your man," the City Attorney had been quoted as saying; "Dan Hernon can not see evidence, when he does not want to—and he never wants to when is it whiskey."

Dan thought of this now, as he looked at the hard, calculating face of Marsden.

"Pretty clever of them," he thought, "especially if Uncle Lige is to be the victim, but I will not play to the galleries by being a party to any damn frame-up."

When the case against Uncle Lige was finally called, the Mayor asked kindly:

"Are you ready for trial, Uncle Lige?"

"I reckon I is, Ma's Dan, jes es ready es I'll be jedgmint day when I is called in de big co't."

"Who is your counsel?" asked the Mayor.

"Mer what, Ma's Dan?"

"Your lawyer," explained the Mayor; "who is going to plead your case for you?"

"I is," Uncle Lige answered simply.

A smile rippled over the court room.

"But you will need a lawyer, you know," continued the Mayor.

"No, indeedy," insisted Uncle Lige. "Ef I wus g'ilty, now, dat would be diffunt; I would den git Ma's John Maxwell ober dar to holp me, fer I dun see him cl'ar a mighty heap o' g'ilty niggers."

The Mayor had to call the court to order, with an emphatic rap of his gavel.

"Howsumeber," continued Uncle Lige, "since I's innocent, I don' need no lawyer. You knows me, Ma's Dan; you's knowed me eber since you wus es high es dat."

The old man leaned forward and held his hand not more than two feet from the floor, while he looked earnestly into the face of the young man.

"I uster b'long ter yo' gran'pa fo' de wah, en does yer reckin dat a nigger wid white folks like dat, gwine ter disgrace 'em by runnin' 'round er sellin' licker ter niggers? Huh?"

"You are out of order, Uncle Lige," the Mayor said brusquely, but a smile crept into his eyes. "Just wait until your time comes and then I will ask Mr. Maxwell to help you, since you have such confidence in his ability."

The old man took his seat unwillingly and sat shaking his head.

"I don' need no lawyer," he kept grumbling; "I don' need no lawyer." I gwine ter plead mer o'n cas'."

Marsden, the City Attorney, had said that he had a good case, and before he was through, it seemed that he was right.

The first witness sworn for the State was a young negro giving his name as Sam Boggus. Sam wore a plaid shirt, a red tie, and a huge brass chain across his chest. He affected a brogue picked up in some Northern city, altogether new to his listeners, but he told an ugly tale. Dan Herndon's eyes grew troubled as he listened.

Boggus said that, on the 26th day of December, he had gone to Lige Herndon's house and that Lige had given him a drink of the best whiskey he had ever tasted, and, when he asked him if he kept that brand all the time, he said: "Not ter give erway."

He said further that he had gone back that afternoon, and offered to buy a pint of the whiskey and that Lige had sold it to him. He stated that Mr. Jones, a policeman, had witnessed the transaction.

When Jones went upon the stand, Dan's heart dropped into his boots. So diligent had Jones become in the fight against whiskey that he had offered a reward for every "blind-tiger" turned in, and,

consequently, business in the Mayor's court had picked up. Aside from his fanatical leanings toward prohibition, it was plain to see that he belonged to that class of people, who instinctively hate the negro.

"The descendant of some whip-lashing overseer," thought Herndon, and he groaned inwardly.

The play of emotions that chased each other over Uncle Lige's face was as varied as a kaleidoscope, but, all the time, his eyes sought those of the young Mayor with the trustfulness of a dog looking at his master.

"Tell the court what you know about this man selling whiskey," coached the City Attorney, when Jones had been sworn.

"Well," began Jones, and his mouth twitched like a cat's when it holds the mouse between its claws, "it was the 26th of December, when I met Sam Boggus in that little alley back of Mr. Denton's store and he was drunk. I asked him where he got the whiskey and he said he bought it from Lige Herndon, and he promised me if I would meet him there that afternoon he would prove to me that Lige was selling it. I met him and he said if I would follow him, he would show me how it was done. I followed him, and he went into Lige Herndon's house. I crept up to the window and peeped

in to see what was happening. I saw Lige go to the cupboard, take down a quart bottle, pour something into a pint bottle and give it to Boggus; Boggus laid a dollar on the table and went out. I met him at the door, and the pint bottle had whiskey in it."

"Ugh!" muttered Uncle Lige, in disgust, "I didn't know befo' dat white folks went er spyin' on ol' niggers."

"Be quiet, Uncle Lige," commanded Herndon. but his face hardened as he looked at Jones.

"Now, Uncle Lige," said Maxwell, who had come forward, when the State closed, "suppose you tell us all about this matter?"

For a moment Uncle Lige stood looking about him, with a puzzled face.

"Just go ahead, Uncle Lige," encouraged Dan, who was in a humor to deal gently with the old man, "just go ahead and tell us how it all happened."

"Look heah, Ma's Dan," said Uncle Lige, leaning eagerly forward and looking into Dan's eyes, "I gwine ter tell you how dis happened an' you gwine ter bleebe me, case you knows me. Dat white man don' know nuffen 'bout niggers a-tall, er he'd know better then to trus' dat highferlutin' Sam Boggus. Now, you knows niggers, Marse Dan."

"Yes," murmured Dan, "go ahead."

"Well, de day 'fo' Chrismus I went ober ter Ma's Henry Harrison's, en he 'low: 'what is the prosspec' fer Chrismus, Lige?' an' I 'low dat dis wus de fustest Chrismus since I bin had er fambly dat I aint had er li'l sumpen er nuther ter drink. Den Ma's Henry he gib me er qua't o' de bes' licker you eber smak yer mout' ober, de kin' what Ol' Ma's uster make de mint-juleps wid in de summer time en de egg-nog in de winter—"

"I object to all that rigamarole," rasped Marsden; "we did not come here to listen to reminiscences."

"O, let him alone, Marsden," pleaded Maxwell, "let him tell it in his own way."

"I gwine ter tell hit de bes' I kin," said Uncle Lige humbly. "It wus de day atter Chrismus, when dis Boggus nigger what say I sol' him de licker, come ter mer hous' ter see mer gal, Ma'y Jane. I didn't like he looks, en I sot on him purty hard. I tol' him ef he wus lookin' fer er gal ter 'sport him, takin' in washin', dat he better go summers else, case dar aint er lazier nigger in dis town dan dat gal, en dat am the Lo'd A'mighty's truf! Boggus sassed back er li'le while, but when he see I aint gwine ter gib him no chance ter talk ter Ma'y Jane, he 'lowed he would be goin'. Den, case I hates ter be unhos-

pit'ble, I ax him ter hab er dram. En I tell you atter dat, dat nigger was slo' ter go, but he did atter er whil'."

"Howsumeber, he come back er li'l later in de day, en 'low dat Sis Bascom, de preacher's wife, dun been tuk wid er mis'ry in her side, en Brer Bascom want ter know ef I didn't hab er li'l drap er whiskey ter send her. I 'membered de time when Brer Bascom dun make me der objec' o' more dan one pinte! disco'se, en hed 'cused me er bein' too fon' o' de flesh-pots o' Egupt, en er lookin' on de wine when 'twus red, en so on. But I knowed dat Sis Bascom couldn't he'p dat, so I went en got dat bottle whut Ma's Henry done gib me, en sont her a pint. En bless, God, Ma's Dan, when I went bak ter de fiah, I see dat dat Boggus nigger done gon en lef' er dollar on de table."

No one made any effort to interrupt the old man, as he told the story. Even the City Attorney accepted it in silence, but there was a sarcastic smile on his dark, sinister face that maddened Dan.

"And what did you do with the dollar?" asked Maxwell, when he had stood a moment in silence.

"Why, I gib it back o' co'se," he said with dignity. "I aint neber sol' er sick naber nuffen yit, much less licker."

Then the old man turned back to face the young

Mayor, upon whose face his eyes had been fixed throughout the story, and resumed:

"Dat ebenin' I tol' Celie dat I would go ober en see how Sis Bascom wus. When I got dah, Sis Bascom warn't sick, but Brer Bascom en dat nigger Boggus wus des er bout es sick es two kinds er whiskey kin make er man. I tol' Brer Bascom dat I mought be fond o' de flesh-pots o' Egupt, but dat I hed er better stumick dan he did, en ef he wus gwine ter 'peat dat p'formance, dat he better 'sign frum de pulpit, 'case er drunk preacher warn't va'y 'ticin' ter sinners. Den I gib dat Boggus nigger dat dollar en tol' him he better mind how he run erroun' 'sultin' self-respectin' folks er tryin' ter pay fer whut dey done gib him, en I boun' his dollars don' grow on trees no mo' den mine do, en he needn't be tryin' ter 'tend like dey so plen'ful.

"En now, Ma's Dan," he ended naively, "I hopes you is ready fer me ter go home. Celie will be waitin' dinner. en it riles her fer me to be late."

For a moment Dat sat perfectly still, looking steadily in the face of the old man. Not for one moment did he doubt the truth of the story Uncle Lige had told, but he felt the eyes of Marsden and Policeman Jones resting on him resentfully.

"I call it a shame," growled Jones, in a tone that reached Dan's ears, "if a white man's word isn't worth more than a nigger's."

"I never heard such a cock-and-bull story," said Marsden. "Of course he sold the whiskey."

Dan raised himself lazily to his feet, and stood a moment, smiling his slow, easy smile.

As he stood looking defiantly into the eyes of Marsden, he was really seeing the coveted place as Mayor of the thriving little city slipping from his grasp; he was seeing the keen disappointment in the face of the girl he loved, and with whom he had planned the many things he hoped to see done. He felt sure now that the whole thing had been planned to entrap him.

"Good propaganda," he thought. "I have seen many a man beaten with less, but—"

Again his eyes sought the face of the old negro, who was looking at him with the trustful eyes of a child.

"Propaganda be damned!" he muttered to himself, and aloud he announced:

"I find the prisoner not guilty."

Then turning to Uncle Lige, he said, playfully:

"Run on home to dinner, Uncle Lige, Aunt Celie might be riled."

THE OWL FORETELLS
A PARTING

THE OWL FORETELLS A PARTING

SARVENT, Ma's Dan."

Dan Herndon looked up from the book he was reading to see Uncle Lige standing in the doorway of his law office.

"Come in, Uncle Lige," he said kindly, "come, sit down and tell me what I can do for you. You have not been selling any more blind-tiger whiskey, have you?"

"No suh, no suh; hit aint nuffen so bad es dat," Uncle Lige laughed, "but I come ter git you ter do a li'l piece o' wuk fer me dis mawnin'."

"All right. Out with it. Do you want a divorce from Celie?"

Again Uncle Lige laughed, heartily. "Ma's Dan, I wants you ter write mer will."

Dan smoothed the smile from his lips with his long thin hand, but his eyes when they met the old man's were serious.

"You are not getting ready to depart this mundane sphere, are you, Uncle Lige? You ought to be good for twenty years yet."

"I don't know, Ma's Dan, life is moughty un-

sertain at bes', en I's er hittin' it right 'long neer de hund'ed year ma'k."

"Sure enough?" queried Dan.

"Yas, suh; I done libed er long time. I done been fru two wahs—de Mexican wah wid yo' grand-pa, en de wah wid de Yankees wid yo' pa—yes suh; I done libe er moughty long time."

"But you still look hale and hearty," encouraged Dan, "and I hope you will be spared us for a long time yet."

"I thanks you kindly, Ma's Dan, but I been feelin' moughty poly dis spring, en I been tellin' Celie dat I 'spec it aint long 'tel I be called, en las' night de call come sho' nuf."

"Were you sick?" asked the young man kindly.

"No, suh; I warn't sick. Des not feelin' va'y spry, en when I go ter bed I can't sleep. I des lay dah wid de thoughts comin' inter my haid fas', like dey aint done since I wus young. I 'membered things I aint thought 'bout since I wus er boy, en de thoughts wus so r'al like dat dey make me feel quar. Why, Ma's Dan, hit wus mos' like seein' er ghos' de way I sensed yo' gran'pa about me. I des lay dah, lookin' out inter de moonlight, and libed ober de days when me and yo' gran'pa wus young. Once I thought 'bout wakin' Celie en axin' her ef she sensed anythin' quar 'bout de night, but dat nig-

ger des lay dar snorin', en me er feelin' sperits in de va'y air.

"I knows you don't bleebe in sperits, Ma's Dan, but dar's a heap o' moughty quar things in dis worl'."

"'There are more things in life, Horatio, than were ever dreamed of in your philosophy,'" quoted Dan.

"Huh, what dat you say?" A look of surprise ran over the old man's features. "Dat's funny! Dat's 'zactly whut Ol' Ma'ster uster say when I talk 'bout sperits, en I allus wonder why, 'case my name aint Horasho. You des like yo' gran'pa, Ma's Dan, en des like yo' pa, too, 'case all de Herndon men des es like es black-eyed peas."

"But what about the call, Uncle Lige?" asked Dan reminding the old man of the tale he had started out to tell. He knew, from experience, that Uncle Lige was liable to digress so far that he would never find his way back to the main point unaided.

"Oh, yes; I wus tellin' you how I done been called las' night. Well, I wus des layin' dar lookin' out on the moonlight, when I got de call. I heerd it fus' 'way down in Peek's Grove, des er common ole squinch owl, but you know whut dat means, Ma's Dan. He say: 'er-wee, er-wee-ee,

er-wee-ee-ee, 'des like dat. Den hit come nearer en light on de warnut tree right by mer win'ner en cry: 'Er-wee, er-wee-ee-ee er-wee-ee-ee-ee,' 'en Celie she des sleep right on. Dat how come I knowed hit wus fer me. Den he holler de thu'd time: 'Er-wee-er-wee-ee-ee er-wee-ee-ee.' Den I tech Celie on de shoul'er en say: "Celie, dar's gwine ter be er 'partment.' Dat nigger des set right up in bed en say: 'Who dat callin' Lige?' Dat 'oman is sholy uncanny, when it comes ter signs. She knowed right off dat de sign wus fer me. Dat's how come I heah dis mawnin'. Celie done been pesterin' me 'bout makin' er will en leavin' her mer 'fects, eber since she heerd 'em read you gran'pa's will, en yo' pa would'er been lef' out ef I hadn't 'membered 'bout dat udder will he done writ."

"All right," said Dan in a business-like manner, as he bent over and tapped the bell that called the stenographer.

Miss Bennett suddenly appeared in the doorway, with pencil and pad. Her clear grey eyes quickly took in the situation, and met Dan's with a gleam of humor. Uncle Lige and his stories were not unknown to Miss Bennett.

"Miss Bennett, Uncle Lige wants a will. You know the preamble, and do not spare the red tape."

She was sure that she knew the preamble, and they went immediately to the legacies. Uncle Lige's "effects" did not make an impressive list, but Dan did his best to make some sort of a showing.

"To my beloved wife, Celie," was bequeathed each and every individual asset, from the humble house and lot on Cedar Hill to the family Bible. Only once did the document vary as to the name of the beneficiary. That was when Uncle Lige wanted Dan to have the powder horn, which he said had been carried through the Revolutionary War, and had been given to him by Dan's great-grandfather. Then, it read: "To my young master and friend." The wording here was Miss Bennett's, and to Dan was left this old relic.

"Is that all?" asked Dan kindly.

"All 'scusin' dat 'bout de soul."

Miss Bennett's eyes again met Dan's.

"And to God, who gave it, I commit my soul. Amen," she quoted solemnly.

"Dat's des hit, Miss," said Uncle Lige, "dat's des 'zactly de way Ol' Ma'ster's wus, en dat will please Celie moughtily."

Miss Bennett went to her private office to type the will.

"Dat's er uncommon smart young 'oman," said

Uncle Lige, when she was gone, "she knowed des 'zactly whut I wanted."

"Yes," agreed Dan, "Miss Bennett always understands."

"When you gwine ter git ma'rid, Marse Dan?" Uncle Lige asked irrelevantly.

Dan laughed, "Look out, Uncle Lige, you are getting on dangerous ground. But wouldn't you advise me to do it as soon as a young lady, who always understands, says yes?"

"'Deed I do; 'deed I do," acquiesced Uncle Lige. "It's er pow'ful comfort ter have er 'oman, whut understands widout bein tol'. Dat's whut makes Celie sich er comfort. Dat 'oman kin neer 'bout read mer min' faser dan I kin talk. You better ma'y dat gal, Ma's Dan, 'fo' some udder man fin' how smart she am."

"Good advice," laughed Dan. "But what was it you were saying about my grandfather's will just as Miss Bennett came in?"

"Didn't I neber tell you dat story, Ma's Dan?" Uncle Lige sat a moment, swelling with consequential pride of the garrulous story-teller. He seemed to be gathering up the ragged edges of his memory, and marshalling them in proper array to make an impressive story.

"I don't know ef I kin git de events 'zactly

right in my min', atter all dese years, but I thinks I 'members de mos' 'portant ones. I know I 'members de day whut yo' gran'pa dis'herited Ma's Jeemes, yo' pa, des es same ef it wus yistidy. I aint neber fergit dat. Yo' gran'pa wus er good man, Ma's Dan, but when he git mad he had er temper like de debil, en yo' pa warn't much better."

"Nor am I much better," sighed Dan; "it is in the blood."

"Hit sholy is in de blood. En when dem two come tergedder it wus fiah en tow. Dey uster lead Ol' Miss er awful life; hit kep' her busy tryin' ter keep down peace. Ma's Jeemes he allus crossin' Ol' Ma'ster en er goin' gin his wishes en Ol' Miss she try ter shiel' 'im. She could do mo' wid 'im dan enybudy, but den he des like er young colt,—too full o' life ter be harnessed.

"We-alls thought that when Ma's Jeemes growed up, he would be diffunt, en sho' nuf he wus fer er whil'. Him en Ol' Ma'ster des wuk tergedder like two ol' hosses whut done been bruk ter de same pole. Ol' Ma'ster wus prouder dan Lucifer o' dat boy, en when de wah bruk out, he wus prouder den eber. He allus braggin' 'roun' 'bout whut a sojer Ma's Jeemes wus, en when dat boy come home wid dem Major strops on his shoul'ers, I thought Ol' Ma'ster gwine ter fling er fit.

“When de wah wus ober en Ma’s Jeemes come home we wus all des wil’ wid joy. Dey called it peace when dey stop er shootin’ one ernudder, but it warnt no peace a-tall.

“De kentry des went wil’ en Ol’ Ma’ster en Ma’s Jeemes erlong wid de res’. Ol’ Ma’ster he des hated dem Yankees mo’ pintedly dan eber, en he cuss en he sw’ar ’bout dem carpet-baggers fu’m mawnin’ ’till night. En den he swa’r ef Georgia ratify dat thing, whut he call a damn’ble ’mendmint he gwine ter leebe de State. But Ma’s Jeemes say dat he done fit dem Yankees de bes’ he could, but now dat he done come home he gwine ter quit fightin’, en he pick up his bag en baggage en he went No’t h ter some school. Dat mightneer kill Ol’ Ma’ster; he say dat Ma’s Jeemes don’t love de Souf er he wouldn’t be goin’ ter no Yankee school. I tell you Ol’ Ma’ster sho’ did hate dem Yankees! Ma’s Jeemes he des kep’ writin’ back ’bout how much he larnin’, how he like, en how wrong it wus fer de Souf ter keep on hatin’ en er bearin’ malice. Dat allus make Ol’ Ma’ster cuss wuss den eber.

“Den when he done mos’ wo’ we-alls out er stayin’ up dar fo’ er five years, he come home en ’low he gwinter ma’y a young ’oman, whut he done met up in Boston. Den de debel break loose sho’

'nuf. I 'clare 'fo' God, I aint never hear nuffen like Ol' Ma'ster go on. I thought he gwine ter bus' er blood vessel, en all de time Ol' Miss er holin' on ter him er beggin' him ter hush. When at last she got him still, Ma's Jeemes wus already gone, en dat wus de las' we see o' him tell he pa done daid.

"De day atter Ma's Jeemes leave, Ol' Ma'ster say he gwine ter make er will en a whole passel o' lawyers come ter de house, en he make er will en say he gwine ter cut Ma's Jeemes off widout er penny, en he won't let none o' us mention Ma's Jeemes' name.

"Dat wus de beginnin' o' de end wid Ol' Ma'ster, do. He neber did look like he'se'f 'no mo'. One day I 'sprise him er standin' fo' dat picter o' Ma's Jeemes, wid dem strops on his shoul'er en I knowed he des er eatin' his heart out fer dat boy, but he would die 'fo' he'd say anything,—he des dat stubbo'n.

"Hit wus two er free years atter dat, dat you wus bawn. How come me ter 'member 'zactly how 'twus, mer Sam wus bawn de same year, en when I tole Ol' Ma'ster 'bout de baby, he 'low 'Mr. Jeemes is got er li'l boy too, Lige, en dey gwine ter call him Dan'l'. Dat wus de fus time I eber hear him 'mention Ma's Jeemes since he

went erway. When I tol' Celie whut he say, she 'low she 'spec' de han' o' de li'l chil' gwine ter lead 'em. But she 'low she bleebs it wus too late, 'case she heer er owl at de co'ner o' de big house de night befo', en she know Ol' Ma'ster done been called.

"Later dat day Ol' Ma'ster tol' me ter hitch up de buggy en ca'y him ter town. I ca'y him ter Jedge Branham's offus, en he stay mos' all de ebenin'. He looked purty bad tuckered out when we got home, en he tol' me ter bring him er cup o' coffee in de big book-room, whar he allus stay. When I got back wid de coffee dar set Ol' Ma'ster wid dat picter o' Ma's Jeemes in one hand, en dat big blue book he call his 'Plutark' on he knees. He gib me de book en de picter ter put up, en he say ' 'Taint no use, Lige, a man can't cut off his own flesh en blood, en I done change dat will'. Den he took de coffee en I went back ter mer wuk.

"When de bell ring fer supper, Ol' Ma'ster didn't come; dey ring hit ergin, en still he didn't come. Den I go ter see how come he didn't heer dat bell, en dar he wus er settin' up dar in de big cheer des like he wus ersleep. I walk up en tech him en den I see dat Ol' Ma'ster done got dat call.

"In de bus'le en 'citement, I fergit all 'bout dat will, en whut Ol' Ma'ster done tell me, en hit didn't

come inter mer haid no mo' in er long time. Den one day Ol' Miss call us inter de big book-room ter heer dat will read, 'case she said Ol' Ma'ster done 'membered us all. Ma's Jeemes wus dar wid his haid up, des like I had seed him lots o' times es he went inter er battle, 'cep' he look mo' white en ser'ous. I stood dar en listened as dey read dat will, not takin' in de sense o' hit a-tall. I heer 'em read: 'Ter my 'loved wife Sary Herndon I 'queath dis, dat en de yuther, den he 'membered us all; but when it wus all ober I see dat dey done read he wrong will, 'case Ma's Jeemes aint been mentioned.

"Den I up en say: 'Ol' Miss, you done read de wrong will. Fo' God, you done read de wrong will!' Ol' Miss she des look white en skeered, en 'low: 'Whut you mean, Lige?' Den I tole 'em 'bout how Ol' Ma'ster done made er new will de day I foun' 'im settin' dar daid in his cheer.

"Den dey go ter lookin' fer dat will like er house er fiah. Hit wus er long time fo' we foun' hit. I went mos' 'stracted tryin' ter 'member whar I see Ol' Ma'ster put dat will, dat day when I brung him de coffee inter de big book-room. Den at las' hit des slip inter mer min' des es easy, like er name you been tryin' ter 'member, des like it been dar all de time. Dat's des de way I 'membered 'bout dat

Plutark book. En sho nuf, when Ma's Jeemes tuk it down, dar it wus des like Jedge Branham done writ it out, en put de big seals on.

"Ma's Jeemes wus so happy he neer 'bout wil', 'case he sho' did set a heap o' sto' by Ol' Ma'ster. En he wus moughty proud dat he pa done furgib 'im fo' he die. He can't hep' de way he allus cross 'im; he des er chip offen de ole block. En I spec' you is er 'nuther."

"I wouldn't be surprised," laughed Dan, "and after all I am glad that I am."

"To be sho', you is," answered Uncle Lige. "I des been tellin' Celie how you make me think o' Ol' Ma'ster dat day down ter de Mayor's Co't."

They both laughed at the evidently pleasant experience.

The door opened, and Miss Bennett came in.

"The will is ready," she said with a smile.

"Thank you, Miss," Uncle Lige made an obsequious bow. "Thank you, ma'm, I wus des tellin' Ma's Dan whut a smart 'oman I though you wus ter know des 'zactly how I wanted dat will fixed up, des so it will please Celie, en he low dat you allus understan'. I moughty glad dat Ma's Dan done got somebody ter take keer o' him des like Celie take keer o' me, all dese years."

A blush spread over Miss Bennett's delicate

little face, but her laughing gray eyes met Dan's with a candor and *camaraderie* that he found disconcerting.

"I will look after his office the best I can," she said, as Uncle Lige bowed himself out, hat in hand.

"Why the emphasis on the office, Nell?" Dan came close and was standing over her, his face grown tender. "Why not take care of me always, dear? Come, we have been such good old pals, tell me there need never be 'a' 'partment.' "

"No," Nell laughed softly as she slipped into his out-stretched arms, "no, just an apartment, Dan. I know where we can get a lovely one."

THE COWARD

THE COWARD

AUNT CA'LINE say dar ain't no haint en no sperit in dis heah worl'."

Nehemiah rolled over on the kitchen floor in front of the cozy fire and smiled sardonically up into the face of the little white boy, aged ten, who was trying to frighten him with tales of blood and thunder.

"But I can show you the headless horseman in my book," insisted Dan. "What about that, Nemi? How would you like to meet a horseman carrying his head in his lap?"

"Aunt Ca'line say," Nemi began, but the kitchen door creaked on its hinges and he sat up with a groan.

"O Lordy," he gasped, "I thought sumpen had me."

"Shet up, Nehemiah," growled Aunt Caroline, as she took her cook apron from the nail behind the kitchen door and began her preparations for making a fire. "You's 'bout de bigges' coward I eber see, en you mos' fo'teen. Aint you neber gwine ter hab no sense? You des let dat boy poke fun at you tellin' tales out o' some ol' story book.

You git up frum dar en bring me de stove wood fer to cook dis supper."

For a moment Nemi stood in the doorway looking with dread out into the darkness. The light from the kitchen fire projected a path of gold to the wood-pile, but on its edges lurked dark, fantastic, dancing figures that made his flesh creep, despite the fact that he had just been insisting that there were "no haints en no sperits."

"Go wid me, Dan," he pleaded, "en I'll make you er spool dancer atter supper."

"I thought you weren't afraid," taunted Dan, but good naturedly got up and went with his little play-fellow.

"Uncle Josh told me," said Dan, as he picked up the wood, "that one night as he came through Pine Pitch—"

"Oh, please hush," said Nemi, whose teeth were chattering, "whut you allus want ter skeer folks fer? Anyway, Aunt Ca'line—"

"Look-ee!" said Dan in a stage whisper, as a white calf sauntered slowly across the barn lot into the line of mellow light from the kitchen fire.

Nemi dropped his wood and with a whoop literally fell into the kitchen door, mumbling:

"Sumpen white atter me, Aunt Ca'line, sumpen white atter me," while Dan followed convulsed with laughter.

"You otter be 'shamed o' yo'se'f," scolded Aunt Caroline, as Dan entered. "Dat nigger is des er fool en he can't he'p bein' er coward. Now, des fer dat I gwine ter make you bring dat wood whilst Nemi sets de table."

Nemi began his task of setting the table, whistling gaily, while Dan turned back into the yard with a look of chagrin on his manly face. It did not occur to him to disobey the command of Aunt Caroline, who had been his nurse when he was a baby and now nursed the little golden-haired elf, whom he called "Little Sister" and whom Nemi called "Li'l Missy."

"Whut fur make you sich er coward, Nehemiah?" Aunt Caroline began again to lecture Nemi on his cowardice, when the dining room door opened and Mrs. Graham, her young mistress, stood in the doorway with a white set face.

"Aunt Caroline," she began in a frightened voice, Aunt Caroline, come quick—"

"Whut's dat, honey? You looks mos' es skeered es dat pesky Nehemiah. Is you seen one o' dem dar ghoses whut Dan is allus talkin' erbout ter skeer dat nigger ashy?"

"It's the baby—she's sick," answered Mrs. Graham, desperately sick; come quick."

She turned and ran back up the stairway. The

old negro followed, leaving the boys awed into silence.

"Whut ef she wuster die?" said Nemi, at last, in a sepulchral whisper.

"Don't you say that." Dan stood up, his face gone white. "I could not stand it, and I won't let you say it."

He stood silent a moment, then he put his hand out and touched the little negro boy gently on the arm.

"I am sorry I scared you Nemi," he said, "I did not know how it felt to be frightened, until you frightened me so then. But Dr. Harris won't let Little Sister d—he won't let anything happen to her."

"Yeah," said Nemi, "Miss Embly gwine ter call Dr. Harris; he gwine ter come, en in de mawnin' Li'l Missy gwine ter be—"

At that moment the distracted voice of his mistress came down the hall. She was calling the doctor.

"Central," she begged, "give me 568. I want Dr. Harris—quick Central, I want—"

Then he heard her drop the receiver back on the hook with a sob.

"O God, the line's dead!" she whimpered.

"Now, whut we gwine ter do?" Nemi faced Dan,

but Dan's white face gave him no hope. He turned and ran to his mistress.

"Whar Ma's Dan, Miss Embly?"

"He is in Rome," she groaned. "He can not be reached; the wires are dead. There is not a telephone in working order in ten miles, and it's fifteen to a doctor. O, Nemi, I wish you were a man."

"But I aint, Miss Embly, I's des er boy—er li'l boy—en—er coward," he ended humbly. Then he added:

"Could Dr. Harris sabe Li'l Missy?"

"Yes, yes. I know he could if—but now, Aunt Caroline and I must try."

Mrs. Graham turned with a stricken face and hurried back up the stairway.

Nemi stood looking after her in silence for a minute. Then, he reached down, took his ragged little cap up from the kitchen floor and stumbled out into the darkness.

It was November and a slow cold rain had been falling all day. The rain had ceased at dark, but the fog was so heavy that one could scarcely see ten paces ahead. Nemi's teeth chattered as he groped his way to the barn and to the stable of the little mare that Mr. Graham had bought the summer before and which Dan and Nemi had ap-

propriated to their own use, and for their amusement had taught her as many tricks as a circus pony. She was long, lean and lank; her mane and tail were shaggy, but she had the legs of a pacer and Nemi knew that she could race the wind.

"Come heah, Dixie," he coaxed, as he stood in the stable door with the bridle in his hands. "Come heah, 'case me en you's gwin fer de doctor fer Li'l Missy. Hit's er long dark ride, ol' gal, but I's got dat rabbit foot whut Unc' Josh done gib me."

"Co's' I's skeered," he muttered as he buckled the saddle girth with trembling fingers. "Co's' I's skeered, but it aint like Li'l Missy didn't need us. I'd go ter ride wid de haidless hoss'man hese'f, ef hit wus fer Li'l Missy."

The boy talked, rapidly, nervously to himself to keep up his courage, as he led the little mare to the gate, mounted and turned her head south, toward Rome, fifteen miles away—fifteen miles of slush, mud darkness and horror. But at the end of the road would be Dr. Harris and life for "Li'l Missy." Gritting his teeth, Nemi bent forward until his face almost touched the neck of the mare and rode like one possessed.

"Go on, Dixie," he coaxed, caressing the long thin neck with trembling fingers. "Go on, Ol' Hoss, we's gwine atter de doctor fer Li'l Missy."

We would do anything fer Li'l Missy, wouldn't we Dixie?"

Thus he talked on and on, hardly knowing what he said, while he rode as one who races with death. Often his eyes were closed. He gave the mare her head feeling that she knew the road, and he was thankful that he might thus shut out the fantastic shapes that he felt lurked behind each shadow. Mile after mile of muddy road was passed, while he still muttered words of encouragement to his steed.

"Hit's 'bout time we wus comin' ter dat bridge, en dat'll be ha'f way. I sholy would hate ter meet dat haidless hoss'man whut Dan's allus mouthin' 'bout. But den ef he sho' nuff haidless, he mought neber see me en you, Dixie." He laughed mirthlessly. "But den how we gwine ter see dat bridge?"

For a moment his soul was immersed in a new wave of fear. Demon voices whispered that he had better go back.

The covered bridge had just been erected over the Etowah, and when Nemi had crossed it in the day time, accompanied by Uncle Josh, it had seemed to him a convenient place for spirits to loiter. Tonight, the very thought of its murky darkness turned his blood to ice. He had chosen the bridge rather than the ferry a mile below, be-

cause he knew the river to be too high for the flat to be used in safety. But, now, he almost wished he had chosen a certain danger to the ones his fertile imagination was calling up.

"Li'l Missy need us, Dixie," he muttered more for the encouragement of himself than for the horse. "We—O Lordy! whut's dat?"

A sudden light loomed in the distance and the whistle of a boat sent the chills of horror down his spine. The next instant he realized that it was a tug-boat and that he was in reality nearing the bridge.

A hundred paces further and he could discern the dim outlines of Hampton's Bridge. Leaning forward until he was almost prone upon the mare's neck he urged her to greater speed. The horse's breath came fast; his own in gasps, and the beat of his heart almost rivaled the dull thud of the horse's feet upon the muddy road.

Suddenly Dixie stretched her long thin neck, gave a nervous forward leap and with a stiffening of every muscle, came to a dead halt with her fore feet planted upon the bridge. In vain Nemi begged, plead and coaxed.

"Go on, Dixie, Ol' Hoss! Please go on."

Then, he became frantic and beat his rough-shod little heels against her lean flanks, while he lashed impotently with the reins.

"I gwine ter kill you, er make you go," he raved: "whut you take me fer, a quitter? I started atter de doctor fer Li'l Missy, en I gwine."

Slowly the meaning of what had happened dawned upon him. The spirit of the horse seemed to communicate with the spirit of the boy and his little black arms went around her neck impulsively.

"Po' li'l critter," he crooned, "po' li'l critter, you des skeered, dat's whut's de matter wid you. You's des es skeered er dat bridge es I is o' de ghos'es in the dark, de haidless hoss'man, en de 'oman in white dat moves widout no feet. You's des er plain coward, but den you aint got no sense fer ter tell you dat; you's got ter go, skeered er no skeered, when Li'l Missy need you. I's sorry fer you, but you des got ter go. Please come on." He patted the mare's neck and crooned softly.

Suddenly Nemi began to have a strange new fear, more terrible than any he had before. He began to be afraid that after all he was going to fail; that Dr. Harris was not going to be reached and that Li'l Missy would die. For the first time that night the hot tears came and dripped down the little black face, while he sobbed brokenly, talking to himself, to Dixie and sometimes to God.

"Please, God," he muttered, "you know Li'l Missy—she looks des like er engel, God. En you

knows Miss Embly en Ma's Dan, en Li'l Dan, en you knows Aunt Ca'line en me, en you knows des how we-alls feel 'bout Li'l Missy. We des couldn't lib widout dat chil', en you mustn't let me fail now. God, you knows whut a coward I is, en you knows whut I done suffer ternight, er tryin' ter sabe Li'l Missy, how I done dare de dark, en de ghos'es, en de sperits whut creep in de night, all 'case I love Li'l Missy so, so please God, make dis damn hoss' go."

But God turned a deaf ear, and still Dixie stood with her feet planted stolidly before her for ten, twenty, thirty minutes, which seemed like an eternity to the wailing little negro.

Slowly it dawned upon Nemi that he was beaten; that to stand begging Dixie to move was wasting time, and that God helps those who help themselves.

When this thought broke upon him, he wiped his eyes upon his sleeves, took up the reins and slowly turned Dixie's head toward the ferry a mile below.

"De riber's too high fer to be safe crossin' on dat flat," he muttered, "but who's lookin' fer safety ternight? I gwine ter cross dat riber wid dis hoss' er bus'."

That Dixie might fear the flat even more than

she had feared the bridge and again balk did not enter Nemi's optimistic mind. In fact, he knew from experience that the little mare had no fear of water, but young as he was he knew that to steer a flat-boat across the Etowah, when the river ran high was no child's play.

True to his fears the river ran black and turbid between the points of highest water mark. The clouds had begun to lift and here and there the stars broke through the clouds and showed the old flat, already lifted from its mooring, straining heavily at the cable. Nemi waded into the muddy eddy and, with the inconsistency of a balking horse, Dixie meekly followed, lifting her feet gingerly with each step until they were planted safely upon the flat, that rocked crazily at the first contact of the horse's feet, then righted itself as Nemi untied the anchor, as he had often seen his master do in the absence of the ferryman.

Grim determination steadied Nemi's hand as he began to operate the steering lever that controlled the wheel upon the cable. His heart gave a sudden throb, then stood still with fright as he felt the line tighten, as the wheel began to crawl down the cable with the force of the current, which was sending the flat down stream with such force that the cable grew taut. With eyes wide and strained he

watched the wheel spin madly upon the cable, while he operated the steering lever in a feeble effort to slacken the strain.

As they came into mid-current, the faint star light that was steadily increasing made it possible for him to see that the current was full of rubbish; brush that had been swept from its moorings, and logs that had been lifted from rafts laden for shipping. With his hand still upon the lever, he dropped upon his knees and watched in fascination an immense pine log that was headed toward him, the swiftness of the current spinning it around like a top thrown from a taut cord.

"O God A'mighty," he groaned, "I gwine ter be kilt now fer sho', en I aint gwine ter git de doctor fer ter sabe Li'l Missy. I wish I hadn't sassed Aunt Car'line," he added with dry lips, "ner stole nuffen frum dat pantry, but ef Li'l Missy do die, I know she'll ax God fer ter let me into Heben."

Nemi let go of the lever, shut his eyes and dropped upon his face, as the huge log struck the flat with such force that the cable was broken. For a moment the flat spun rapidly in mid stream, while the brown water immersed the little figure lying prone on its face, at the feet of his little mare, then it righted itself and went spinning madly down stream.

Nemi lost consciousness, from the shock, for a period that he was never able to calculate. When he did open his eyes, the clouds had lifted; a full moon shone down upon him and the flat had miraculously come to anchor.

He lay for a moment looking idly up at the sky, watching the clouds drift in fantastic shapes across the face of the moon, as he often did through the window of Aunt Caroline's cabin. Then, he sat up slowly, rubbed his eyes and looked about him in bewilderment. The noise of the switch engines, the loud voices of the train crew and the whir of big machinery in the distance told him that he had come to anchor within the city of Rome.

With a sob of thankfulness he jumped to his feet, threw his arms about the neck of Dixie, as she stood shivering and frightened in the center of the flat.

"Bless God, Ol' Hoss', we gwine ter git de doctor atter all."

Nemi led the shivering little mare up the steep incline of the bank, tied her to a clump of bushes that shielded her from the wind, and turning ran up the street, his clothes clinging fantastically to his angular little frame.

Half a block away, he ran into a night watchman.

"Take me ter Dr. Harris, quick," he sobbed, "Li'l Missy is dyin' en Miss Embly say he kin sabe her."

There was something in the boy's face that carried conviction. The watchman knew that it was no small errand upon which he had been sent, and lent him what aid he could in locating Dr. Harris and Mr. Graham.

Twenty minutes later, Dr. Harris and Dan Graham were speeding north along Summerville Pike, with splendid disregard for all speed laws, while in the foot of the car, wrapped in a lap-robe, crouched Nemi, his head leaning against Dan Graham's knee.

The faithful little horse was temporarily left behind in good hands.

When they reached home, Mr. Graham bounded out of the car and hurried up the walk with Dr. Harris and Nemi close beside him.

"She is better, the baby is saved," Mrs. Graham cried, as she opened the door to them and fell upon her husband's breast.

"Aunt Caroline saved her, Dan," she whispered as she bent over Aunt Caroline, who sat crooning softly, with the sleeping baby on her knees.

"I knowed I had ter," answered Aunt Caroline

with great unction. "Dar warn't nobody ter he'p but dat coward Nehemiah, en I tol'—"

"Stop," said Mr. Graham, solemnly, as he reached out and pulled Nemi, who was still wrapped in the lap-robe, half asleep, into the line of Aunt Caroline's vision.

"Don't you ever call this boy a coward again. He has shown more bravery and heroism tonight than I have ever known a boy to show. I hope my own son may grow up as brave."

"I aint afeered o' ghos'es no mo'," said Nemi sleepily.

"Nor of anything else," said Mr. Graham, as his hand went out and rested upon the wooly head with the tenderness of a benediction.

MISS JULIE'S RING

MISS JULIE'S RING

“GRANNY, whar’d Shelly git dat li’l ring wid de blue stun in hit?”

Aunt Delphy laid down the knife with which she was peeling potatoes, and looked up at her small grandson standing in the kitchen doorway.

“Huh, whut dat, Booker? You chillun is allus a pesterin’ me. Whar you reckon she git er ring wid er blue stun in hit? Dat gal’s des foolin’ you, makin’ like she got sumpen, when she aint.”

“But she got hit dis time, sho’ nuff.” Booker dropped down in the door. “She got hit on her finger right now. I boun’ she stole hit.”

“Hi! Whut’s dat? You bet she stole hit? Well, I bet she better not steal nuffen. I’s libed mos’ er hund’ed years, en I aint gwine ter be disgraced, now, by no ’count gran’chillun takin’ whut don’ b’long ter ’em. Whar dat gal?”

Aunt Delphy got up and stood looking toward the servant house in the back of the yard.

“Hi dar, Balshazar!”

A fourteen-year-old girl appeared in the doorway, singing lustily:

“Fiah in de east,
Fiah in de west,
Fiah done burn up de wilderness!”

"Stop dat noise en come heah, gal."

The girl came slowly across the yard, still singing:

"Fiah in de east . . ."

"Shet up!" snapped Aunt Delphy. "I gwine ter make you think fiah in de east. Whar did you git enny ring wid er blue stun in hit?"

"Who said I had er ring?" asked Shelly sullenly.

"I did," said the boy impudently putting his tongue out at his sister. "I tol' you yestidy dat ef you didn't gib me some er dat cake whut Miss Julie gib you, I gwine ter tell Granny 'bout dat ring. I boun' yo' hide won't hol' shucks when Granny git froo wid you, 'case I know you stole hit."

"I didn't neder," said the girl angrily. "Miss Julie gib hit ter me."

"Aint you shame yo'se'f? You gwine ter bring yo' ole Granny's haid in sorrer ter de grabe, yit, you lim' o' Satan. I done lib right heah eber since Miss Julie's pa wus er li'l boy, trus'ed by de whole fambly. I done raised my own chillun right dar in dat same li'l house, en not er rogue ermong 'em, en heah you come erlong when I mos' daid, en begin ter steal en ter lie. Let me see dat ring, nigger!"

Shelly put out her hand. On her finger gleamed a circlet and in the center of a heart of beaten gold, shone an opal of rare value.

Aunt Delphy sank back in her chair, her face working with emotion.

"God A'mighty, gal, dat's mer young Miss' ring! Let me have hit quick!"

The girl sullenly took the ring from her finger and laid it in the old woman's hand.

"I boun' Miss Julie don't know de hist'ry o' dis ring," said Aunt Delphy, forgetting her anger in the pleasant prospect of a new story to tell. "I gwine ter tell her right now."

She got up, took off her cook apron and went slowly toward the front of the house, muttering to herself as she went:

"Dat's des de way o' young folks. Dey don't neber take keer o' nuffen. I boun' when I tell Miss Julie dat dis ring got dis li'l scar on hit in de battle o' Gittesbu'g, she make er turrible miration. Den I reckon she wont be leebin' it erround fer no 'count niggers ter steal."

Miss Julia Anderson looked up from her book with a smile, as the old woman appeared, flustered and out of breath. "What is it, Aunt Delphy?" she asked kindly.

Aunt Delphy sank heavily upon the steps of the broad veranda.

"Is dat yo' ring, honey?" She held the ring toward her young mistress with a hand that shook.

"Oh!" cried Miss Julia eagerly. "Aunt Julia's ring—I thought I had lost it. I am so glad, Aunt Delphy,—so glad, for I love it—and I thought it was gone."

"Did you know dat ring got er hist'ry, honey?"

"No," answered Miss Julia, "only that it belonged to my Aunt Julia, who died young and for whom I am named. Tell me," she added.

She knew from experience that most things connected with the Anderson family, did have a history from Aunt Delphy's viewpoint. She also knew, from experience, that there was often a grain of wheat amid the chaff of Aunt Delphy's stories, and she had learned from them some events of family history, which her busy mother had never found time to tell her. She always listened eagerly to any story that Aunt Delphy had to tell her.

Aunt Delphy, now sat swelling with pride. The feast of memories that stretched out before her, and the glamour and romance of the old days that flooded her emotive memory was almost worth the price of having taken Shelly in her sin.

"You see dat li'l bruised place on de side o' dat

ring?" she began at last. "Well, hit got dat scar at de battle o' Gittesbu'g, when hit wus in Ma's Phil's Carlton's pocket. How come hit in Ma's Phil's pocket? Well, I's comin' ter dat, honey. You see Ma's Phil en Miss Julie—who wus yo' Aunt Julie—wus sweethearts des like you en dat boy whut put dat ring on yo' finger." She looked at the solitaire that gleamed on Julia's finger, and chuckled knowingly. "But he can't come en take her on no long rides on de long summer days. En he can't come en stan' in de moonlight en talk sweet ter her, 'case Ma's Billy done say dat Phil Carlton can't come ter see no gal o' his'n. Didn't you neber heah 'bout dat, honey?"

Miss Julia assured her that she had not, and begged her to go on with the story.

"Well, honey, when Miss Julie wus young, she look des like you. I wus tellin' Sabry yestidy, when I see you go 'cross de yawd, how much you look like yo' Aunt Julie."

The girl smiled at the incongruity of the comparison. She knew enough family history to know that her Aunt had been tall, lithe, and a striking brunette, while she was petite and a blonde. These old *ante-bellum* relics, however, claim a sort of poetic license in their stories, and can not be hampered by too true a realism. So the girl did not demur.

"Miss Julie sholy wus fine, en she wus de pruttiest gal in dis whole kentry, dat's whut she wus. All de young gen'men pay dey 'spects ter her, but she don't keer nuffen erbout none o' dem, lessen it wur Ma's Phil. She en Ma's Phil dey des sorter growed up togedder, dem bein' nabers. Ma's Phil wus allus ober ter we-alls house when dey wus li'l. En when dey growed up 'twarnt much diffunt.

"My, don't I 'member de time when Miss Julie come ter mer li'l house en tell me a mighty big secret, des like I aint done seed it long ago? I done see de love-light in her eyes when Ma's Phil come. I 'spect I knowed it mos' 'fo' she did, 'case I sho' did watch dat chil', since she didn't have no ma, but I 'ten' like I moughty bad 'sprised, en Miss Julie went back ter de house wid her face shinin' en singin' des like her heart would split wid joy.

"Dat night dey had moughty big jolification up ter de big house, en dey dance till mos' day. Dat wus de fus' time Miss Julie eber let on fo' de uthers dat she 'fer Ma's Phil, but she did dat night, mos' pintedly. She danced wid him mos' ev'ry time, 'case she done 'gaged ter him now.

"Dat wus all fo' Ma's Billy en Mr. Carlton fall out. I don't know 'zactly whut dey fall out erbout, but I thinks it wus sumpen 'bout de wah. Ma's Billy he faber de wah, en Mr. Carlton, Ma's

Phil's pa, he don't want no wah, en wid all de 'sput-in' bout hit, dey mos' hed one deyse'ves. Dey des kep' argufyin' 'till dey most hed er duel,—Ma's Phil he kep' 'em f'um it somehow, but den Ma's Billy he up en 'low dat Miss Julie got ter gib Ma's Phil up. Dat he warn't gwinter hab no rank abolisher in his fambly.

“Co'se dat mos' bruk Miss Julie's heart. She cry when she gib me de letter whut say Ma's Phil can't come no mo'. When I gib Ma's Phil dat letter, honey, he des look sick en white en say he don't want ter lib no mo'. Den he say he gwine ter de wah. Dey done 'cide ter hab dat wah, des like Ma's Billy say dey would, but I didn't tell Miss Julie whut he say 'bout de wah, 'case I didn't want ter hu't her no mo'.

“By en by, de time come fer 'em ter go ter de wah, sho' nuf. We didn't know whut it meant den, honey. But we knowed fo' dey come back. Hit meant truble, bloodshed en def; dat wus whut hit meant ter our folks, honey. Hit sho' did!

“Den one day when I wus gwine by de house, Ma's Phil call me by en gib me dat li'l ring, wid de li'l blue stun in hit, en he tell me ter gib hit ter Miss Julie en tell her ter w'ar hit when she come ter tell de sojers goodbye, ef she gwine ter wait fer him. When Miss Julie slip dat ring on her han', honey,

she smile so sweet dat I know she gwine ter wait fer Ma's Phil, ef she hab ter wait 'till jedgmint day.

"Dat ebenin' when Miss Em'ly Gray come ober, Miss Julie got de ring en sho' hit ter Miss Em'ly. Miss Em'ly call hit 'exquigit,' en er lot mo' big wuds whut aint got no feelin' in 'em, en den she 'low dat de li'l stun gwine ter bring bad luck. Miss Julie des laf. She didn't b'lebe no ring whut Ma's Phil gib her gwine ter bring bad luck."

The old woman sat silent, a moment looking into the distance with somber eyes.

"Hit didn't neder," she added at length, morosely. "Hit weren't de ring whut brung bad luck, hit wus de thick haid of this nigger whut's talkin' ter you, honey, dat cos' de truble."

"What did you do, Aunt Delphy?" the young girl asked softly. "I'm sure you meant to be kind."

"Deed, I did, honey. But it wus like dis: On de mawnin' when de sojers wus gwine erway, Ma's Billy sont me ober ter Miss Grey's wid er basket o' fresh vegertabers, outen de garden. I slip up ter Miss Julie's room fo' I go en ax her ef she want me ter tell Ma's Phil eny thing, 'case I hed ter go right by his do'. De po' chil' was still in de baid. Her li'l hands wus hot, en her eyes red like she done been cryin' all night. When I ax her

ef she want ter send Ma's Phil any wud, she des pint ter de table en say: 'Take Phil dat en tell him I can't weah de ring—'case Father—' but she neber did finish. She des turn her haid ter de wall en cry like her po' li'l heart gwine ter bre'k. Den I went ter de table whar dat va'y li'l ring whut you got wus lyin' side o' er letter. I took de ring, but lef' de letter, 'case I didn't know who dat wus to.

"When I gib dat ring ter Ma's Phil en tell him she say she can't weah hit 'case o' sumpen 'bout her pa, his face went white en look des like er grabe-stun, so hard like. Den I tol' 'im whut Miss Em'ly say 'bout dat li'l blue stun gwine ter bring bad luck. He laf, but dar warnt no fun in his laf, ner in his eyes neder. He des drap de ring in his pocket, en 'low he hope 'twould be bad luck ernuf ter bring er bullet dar de fus' place. Den he got on his hoss en rode erway. ,

"I went back ter Miss Julie, en she met me 'way down de lane lookin' skeered en white en 'low: 'Mammy, I can't find my ring—and why didn't you take Phil the letter?'

"Den I knowed I hed fixed things honey, en I sot right down en begun ter moan en ter rastle wid de Lawd ter fix things right. But eben de Lawd, can't fix things right, honey, when you done gone an' done 'em wrong. En Ma's Phil done rode



"Ma's Phil wus gwine ter de lan' whar dey don't gib no furlo's."

erway ter de wah, widout waitin' fer ter say good-by ter eny budy, en he wus ca'yin' wid him, in his bres' pocket dat li'l ring wid de blue stun in hit, sayin' he hoped hit would bring de bullet dah fus' place."

The old woman paused, and the young girl looked up through eyes that were not clear, to see two great tears running down the rugged old black face. Finally, Aunt Delphy controlled herself and went on.

"Dem wus tur'ble times, honey, tur'ble times. De wimin wus lef' ter wait fer de men whut moughten't come back. En all dis time Miss Julie went er-round lookin' des like er ghos' o' de Miss Julie whut uster be. She don't sing no mo', en she look so thin en white hit des make mer heart sick fer ter see her. But de po' chil' aint got nobody ter see how she greebe but des me. Her ma done daid, en do' Ma's Billy set a heap o' sto' by dat chil', he wus des blin' es er bat, en all de time he des set dah er readin' en er readin' erbout dat wah, while Miss Julie des kep' er droopin' like her flower dat wus wiltin'.

"I can't 'member how long de wah been goin' on—you don't know much 'bout time, when things like dat happenin'—when Ma's Billy come in one night en say dat Phil Carlton done been brung

home wounded. I looked up at Miss Julie en I see she wus hol'in' on ter a cheer, en I knowed she couldn't speak.

"Dat night she slip outen de house en come ter mer cabin en tell me she want me ter go wid her ter see Ma's Phil. When we got dah, Miss Carlton she des cry en say she glad Miss Julie come, 'case Ma's Phil done been callin' fer her all day, en dat Ma's Phil didn't hab long fer ter stay in dis worl'. Den Miss Julie she slipped inter de room whar Ma's Phil lay, en I went inter de kitchen ter wait fer her. I neber did know how long she stay, 'case I done fell ersleep dar fo' de kitchen fiah, en wus dreamin' 'bout dat li'l ring whut had been bad luck ernuf ter bring er bullet right whar Ma's Phil say he hoped hit would.

"At last, when Miss Julie come, she hed on dat ring, en I knowed she hed done promised ter wait fer Ma's Phil. I thought she would hev ter wait er long time, 'case Ma's Phil wus gwine ter de lan' whar dey don't gib no furlo's.

"Hit warn't so long atter all; fer when Ma's Phil die, Miss Julie she dus kep' er fadin' en er fadin' en I knowed hit warn't no consumption like de doctors say, but des grief fer Ma's Phil. I tol' John she gwinter go meet him, en she did. Dat wus de year Ma's Henry come home widout his

awm, en Ma's Thomas he stay fer allus—right dar on de battle field. Dem wus turble times honey, turble times. But I didn't grebe fer Miss Julie, 'case she wusn't made fer dis worl', en John he 'low, dat when folks love like Ma's Phil en Miss Julie dat it wus made up to 'em up dah."

The old voice quavered, broke, then trailed off into a whisper.

"It's made up—to 'em—up—dah."

The young girl's right hand involuntarily sought the left, where the solitaire gleamed, and she laughed, brokenly, sobbingly:

"I shall treasure the little ring more than ever now." She held it up to the window and watched the sunlight gleaming on the opal. "And to think I had lost it. Where did you find it, Aunt Delphy?"

"Belshazar had hit," answered Aunt Delphy noncommittally.

If Miss Julie saw anything suspicious in the fact that Shelly had the ring, she ignored it.

"Tell Shelly I appreciate her finding it," she said simply, "and I give her this little pin as a token of my gratitude." She took a little crescent pin from her collar and held it toward the old woman, with a smile.

Aunt Delphy hesitated a moment, then took the

pin. The glamour of the old days faded from her mind, and she came painfully back to the present and a realization of what Shelly had done. A double-dyed sin, in her mind, since she had desecrated the ring with a "hist'ry", but her pride made it hard for her to tell Miss Julia that her granddaughter had really stolen the ring.

She walked slowly back to her work, turning the pin over thoughtfully in her hand. In the kitchen, Shelly bent over the sink, still, singing lustily:

"Fiah in de east,
Fiah in de west
Fiah done bu'n up de wilderness."

Booker stood in the doorway, an unholy grin of satisfied vengeance on his face.

"Look out Shelly, dar come Granny, en I boun' she make you think fiah done bu'n you up fer steal-in' dat ring."

"You git out o' heah nigger," Aunt Delphy said, savagely, "I gwine ter bus' you open." She made a backhanded lick at Booker, who dodged beneath her hand and slipped out at the door. He put his tongue out at Shelly as he went by.

"I tol' you dat you better 'vide dat cake wid me."

Aunt Delphy went thoughtfully to the stove and opened the door.

“I am gettin mos’ too ol’ ter be larrapin’ es big er gal es Belshazar,” she muttered, “but I aint gwine ter be givin’ no reward fer stealin’.” And she dropped the pin into the glowing coals.

COUNSEL FOR DEFENSE

COUNSEL FOR DEFENSE

ELSA BREEN, practicing attorney, sat in her office at the end of the long corridor, down which few clients found their way. For two years Elsa had sat in her office, waiting for people to find her out, while she made a fetish of professional ethics.

"Them notions is mighty fine, Miss Breen," said the fat, heavy-faced man, whose office fronted the street and whose waiting room was always crowded, "but they won't go in these parts. You gotta play the game."

Elsa felt like raising the window when he was gone. The atmosphere became stifling in his presence. But this morning, as she sat toying with the silver paper cutter, she was wondering if after all he was right; if it would be possible to practice law and not "play the game," as her neighbor had called the chicanery of questionable practice.

She put forth a long, delicate hand and pulled a vase of roses close enough to bury her face in them.

"I won't give up," she whispered, "nor will I compromise. Daddy stayed above the muck and mire, and I will do the same."

With a sigh she put the roses back in place and

took up a volume of Roberts on Personal Injuries. Elsa was studying her first important case—a suit for damages against the L. & N. Railroad Company. The law was clear; the principles were alluring, full of the beautiful teachings of equity, justice and right. But the facts—Elsa puckered her pretty young face—facts were such stubborn things. In her two years at the bar, Elsa had learned that on an average there were about nine questions of fact to one of law, and down the clear, logical pathway of the evidence she had been able to unearth, she saw her high hopes of a big verdict go glimmering. Her disappointment was acute.

“Any way, I am not in as bad a fix as Mr. Tutt, who found both the law and the facts against him,” she thought with a smile, “and he always won.”

She got up to put the book back in place, and stood listening to footsteps coming down the hall, slow, uncertain, shuffling footsteps. Elsa listened. Once they paused and went back up the hall, toward the office of the heavy-faced man at the front. Elsa smiled—they nearly all went back. But, then, they turned and came with a more certain tread back to Elsa’s door, and at the timid knock, she called:

“Come in.”

“Mawnin’, Missy.”

Elsa gave a start. The gnome-like little negro man standing in the door-way was so comical that she could scarcely suppress a smile.

"Is you de lawyer, Missy?"

"I am." Elsa sat up and tried to look dignified, but there was something about the old black face, with its prominent eyes and teeth out of all proportion to the rest of his anatomy, that she found it hard to do. Her artist's mind was rapidly cataloguing him as to type, characteristics and habits.

"White man's negro," she tabulated, "loyal to the point of worship; improvident; thriftless; probably drunken—" A pungent odor and a slight bleary look about the eyes helped her to this conclusion.

"What can I do for you?" Elsa indicated a chair at the end of her desk, but the old man continued to stand, nervously twirling his hat.

"Might as well sit down," she urged, "you can talk better."

He sank into a chair, but sat poised on the edge as a bird teeters on a limb, ready for flight.

Elsa smiled at his evident confusion. Was it because she was a woman, she wondered, or was he dreading to divulge the nature of his crime? She had readily put his case on the criminal docket. Probably another bootlegger—new to the game, else he would have stopped at the front.

"Well, what is the trouble? Have you been 'caught with the goods', as the boys say—bootlegging, is it?"

"No'm, Missy—that is—I aint," he stammered, then gaining confidence from a closer study of her face, he began in a more positive way:

" 'Taint me dat's cha'ged wid no crime, Missy, hit's er frien' o' mine. A young white man whut I done knowed all his life, en his folks afore him, done gone en got inter tr'uble en I wan'er—" he paused and sat a moment with his eyes on the door.

"Hit's like dis," he said at last, deciding to make a clean breast of it, "I's ol' en tough, en des er nigger enyways, en er chaingang sentence wont hu't me, but hit would go purty hard wid Mr. Robert, en 'sides hit would des 'bout kill his ma. Miss Mary is bin so good ter me, dat I's ready ter do enything ter sabe her frum de disgrace I see comin' her way, lessen sumpen done fer ter sabe Mr. Robert."

"Wait," Elsa held up her hand, "Uncle—"

"Mose," he supplied.

"Uncle Mose, the law won't permit you to be punished for another man's crime. As fine as the spirit is that prompts you to offer to make the sacrifice, it can not be done."

"No'm," said Mose humbly, "not efen de law

knows hit, hit won't, but howcome, Missy—I see many er man punished fer 'nuther's crime."

"So have I," said Elsa sadly, "but that is not the intent of the law."

"No'm, Missy, but de 'tent o' de law, en de 'tent o' de lawyers is not allus de same t'ing; en er right kind o' lawyer kin 'feat de 'tent o' de law. I'se see hit done lots o' times."

"I don't do that sort of practice," Elsa drew herself up indignantly.

"But lis'en, Missy, hit's like dis. De young white man is caught wid whiskey in his room, en ef sumpen aint done, dat judge gwine ter sen' him ter de chaingang, en he'l be ruint, en hit 'll kill Miss Mary, but hit aint gwine ter hu't Mose fer ter wu'k in de chaingang no wuser den ter wu'k enywhar else. How come I can't tell de jedge dat I put dat whiskey dar unbeknownst ter Mr. Robert, whilst I wus cleanin' his room? Den, maybe he'd let Mr. Robert go, sabe Miss Mary de disgrace o' her son bein' sont ter de chaingang, en des sen' Ol' Mose instid."

"Did you put it there?"

The question was direct and Elsa bent forward trying to read the very heart of the old man, who was proposing this strange thing.

"No'm, Missy, but I kin *say* I did—God don' min' er lie lak' dat."

"I wonder," Elsa whispered, but aloud she said: "Tell me just what you want to do."

"I wants ter go in ter de co't en tell de jedge dat I put dat whiskey in Mr. Robert's room, 'tendin' fer ter take hit out en sell hit, en I wants er lawyer fer ter tell me how ter git in ter de co't, en des how ter tell dat tale so es ter make hit stick, en not spring er leak."

"That is, you want a lawyer to help you build what Kipling calls a 'water tight lie'," laughed Elsa.

"Yas'm, Missy, Yas'm. I don' know Mr. Kiplun, but dat is des 'zactly whut I wants. En I's got fifty dollars ter pay de lawyer fer ter he'p me fix hit."

"You have come to the wrong place. I cannot help you. I—Oh, you are better than I am, maybe, to want to make this sacrifice, but I cannot help you to deceive the court; I cannot help you build your lie."

Mose was turning sadly away, then suddenly he looked back with a wry attempt at a smile:

"I thought a 'oman would do better den er man," he said, "'case when dey sets dey min's ter hit, dey sholy am 'ceitful critters."

Elsa laughed softly. She did not resent the indictment against her sex. She stood silent a moment, then she said:

"I know who—"

Was she being a party, she wondered, but continued, "The man up the hall will help you. Give him the fifty dollars and tell him what you want—you needn't even tell him why, the fifty dollars will be convincing."

When he had turned into the office at the front, Elsa closed her door and sank into a chair with a broken, nervous laugh.

"I wonder what is right?" she whispered.

The next morning Elsa went to court, and, although she had never made a habit of lingering over the criminal docket she sat through the day, determined to see the outcome of Uncle Mose's effort to sacrifice himself.

When she went at nine o'clock she found the benches in the Superior Court room filled to their capacity with witnesses, spectators and men summoned for jury service.

The gallery above, set aside for negroes, was filled with rows of black and brown faces, from which every vestige of intelligence or interest had intentionally been wiped.

Elsa had long since found that the negroes' chief armor of defense, when they found themselves in the court room, was this mask of animal-like stupidity, with which they clothed their countenances.

She quickly located Uncle Mose, sitting hunched down in one of the front seats, his gnome-like face wearing an expression as enigmatic as the Sphinx.

Inside the railing, where Elsa had taken her seat, everything was astir with the business of the law. The prosecuting attorney, a big over-towering man, with grim purpose written all over his face, came and took his seat at the prosecuting table. He began to arrange the batch of papers, which Elsa recognized as accusations, and she found herself speculating upon which one was marked "The State versus Robert Mann". At the table set aside for defense's counsel, Elsa recognized her neighbor, Mr. Cagle, and concluded that the rakish, dissolute looking young man at his side must be Robert Mann. Over in the corner the court stenographer sat playing idly with the long, slim pencils, sharpened at both ends, that lay in profusion at his elbow, while the clerk and the sheriff were busy over the jury list.

"What is holding up the traffic?" asked a young lawyer, facetiously, addressing the man on Elsa's left.

"Hunting the twelfth good man and true, to make up a jury," was the answer, "and they are having a harder time than Diogenes with his lantern."

Elsa shrugged. She wondered how long it would take her to feel sufficiently at home in the court room to make a jest. To her the law, especially criminal law, was grim business.

There were many things to which she tried to adjust herself as the day went by, and she sat watching the mill of the court, like the mill of the gods, "grind slowly but exceeding fine."

"We, the jury, find the defendant guilty," came with such certainty and regularity, that the words made themselves into a little song of woe and beat over and over in her brain until she was sick and dizzy. But she still sat patiently.

Finally the case of The State versus Robert Mann was called. She caught her breath and waited. Her neighbor, with the fat, heavy face, oily hair and a mouth that looked like a meat chopper got to his feet, rubbed his hands together and smiled his sleek, oily smile.

"May it please Your Honor," he began, "this is a peculiar case, a very peculiar case. Mr. Solicitor and I have put our heads together and we have agreed that I may present to you the very peculiar circumstances connected with this case, and let you pass upon the facts without the intervention of a jury."

The judge let his shrewd gray eyes rest upon the lawyer's face.

“All right, Mr. Cagle, let us have the facts.”

“My client, Mr. Mann, admits a *prima facie* case; the goods were found in his room; he admits that it is his room, under his control. He also admits that he had been drinking—the fact is, Your Honor, he was pretty well ‘tanked up.’ He had just come from a little party out at Hollingsworth Road House. He left there with a party of friends, all about in his condition, and the officers followed them on account of the noise they were making—followed Mann to his room, searched it and found the whiskey. Mr. Mann has protested all along that he knew nothing of the whiskey; that it was not his, and that he had no knowledge of who put it there or when, but in the face of all the circumstances, we knew it would be useless to plead that. Mr. Mann had intended to plead guilty to technical possession of the whiskey and ask you to be as lenient as possible. But yesterday a strange thing happened—an almost unbelievable thing. The man, who is responsible for the whiskey being in Mr. Mann’s room came to my office, and says that he cannot sit by and see Mr. Mann punished for his crime. And in order that he may be corroborated, Your Honor, we have witnesses here to swear that they purchased whiskey from this man, Mose Driver, and that he told them he kept it in Mr. Mann’s room, he being

janitor for that apartment and also cleans and keeps Mr. Mann's clothes, having access to his closets."

Judge Sears sat pulling thoughtfully at the lock of gray hair that fell across his forehead.

"Put up your man, Mr. Cagle," he said laconically.

Mose was put on the stand and told an intelligent, probable tale. To Elsa, even, who knew the inside, it sounded reasonable.

"Yas, sar, yas, sar, Jedge," Mose said, "I put de whiskey in Mr. Robert's room, unbeknownst ter him. I allus take keer o' his room, en lay out his clo'se. I I been puttin' de whiskey whut I sol' dar er long time, en Mr. Robert he aint neber look in ter dat little nook in de dark closet fer nuffen; he aint had no 'spicion I wus sellin' whiskey. I aint neber sell him none; hit wus des whut you call 'white lightnin' ' taint fitten fer Mr. Robert ter drink. I sol' hit mos'ly ter niggers."

Mose sat in the witness seat, his head bowed, dejected, shamed, the correct picture of a guilty man, but once Elsa's eyes met his and she read in them the unholy joy of one who gloats over the perfection of the lie he is telling.

From his face, her eyes traveled to the face of Robert Mann, weak, sensual, utterly selfish, but something of the strain under which he sat showed

in the tightly clasped hands that hung at the ends of his rigid arms. She saw his knuckles go white under the intensity of his grip. Once he made a forward motion of his body, as if he tried to get to his feet, but then sank back and sat still. Elsa persistently tried to catch his eyes, but could not; they evaded hers, wavering from Mose to his attorney, back to his feet and stayed there, while his face settled into sullen rebelliousness and from that to stolid indifference.

"That's his death warrant," thought Elsa, and her clear, gray eyes went back to Mose as he came awkwardly down from the stand, passing her chair with a dejected, dragging step, but from under his shaggy eyebrows his eyes looked into her own, as he passed.

" 'Taint no hahm ter lie lak' dat," his eyes insisted.

"You are a better man than I am, Gunga Din," she quoted, although she knew he could not understand.

There were other witnesses, three of them—two men and a woman. They also told probable tales of having purchased whiskey from Mose Driver. And the woman said he had shown her where he kept it in "a little cubby-hole in Mr. Mann's closet."

Elsa sat listening to the questions and answers meet each other upon the footing of old acquaintances, and the chill of mental nausea crept over her.

"He certainly knows how to play the game," she thought as her eyes rested upon Cagle, her neighbor, "I wonder—"

Her thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the voice of the Judge.

"Stand up, Mose, and receive your sentence."

Mose stood up and not an eye-lid quivered, as the judge pronounced the sentence.

"Twelve months' hard labor in the chaingang."

For a moment Mose stood looking silently into the judge's face.

"Yas, sir, Jedge, thankee, sir."

And Elsa went sick with fear that the Judge might read the riotous joy she saw in his eyes as he turned toward her; that he might see through the whole fiasco and order the case against Robert Mann to proceed.

"Fear!" With a shiver she realized that it was a distinct fear, and that she was lined up on the side of those seeking to defeat justice. What a muddle it all was.

The next moment, she was standing gripping the back of her chair. Court had adjourned. The officers had taken charge of Mose, and had led him toward jail and twelve months of hard labor, wearing the insignia of disgrace.

She had watched Robert Mann check the good

impulse that had carried him one step toward Mose, then turn and slink down the back stairs,—back to his life of shame and licentiousness. The stenographer was gathering up his scattered notes. The clerk was arranging his papers. The gray-haired, venerable Judge came by and laid his hand on her shoulder.

“Not a cheerful thing to see justice administered, eh, Miss Elsa?”

“Justice!” Elsa slipped from under his hand, with a hysterical laugh. “Did you say justice, Judge Sears?”

Judge Sears cast a keen, questioning look at her flushed face and shook his head. He had expected better things of Elsa Breen. He had thought her too well balanced to grow sentimental and maudlin over a sentence pronounced on a negro, who plead guilty to selling whiskey, and worse, to secreting it in a white man’s closet.

“Don’t take things too hard, Miss Elsa,” he said kindly, as he put on his hat, as if to go, “I might have known, though, that your woman’s heart would have led you to the side of defense always.”

“No, not always.” said Elsa, “I believe in enforcing the law. But when the time comes to try Mose for the real crime he has committed, I do want to be written down as Counsel for Defense.”

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